

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

STAVANGER NORWAY

TOPIC

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DEAF STUDENTS AND THE HEARING  
COMMUNITY IN RAMOTSWA BOTSWANA

THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENT FOR THE MASTERS DEGREE IN  
GLOBAL STUDIES.

BY

ROSWITHA KAMOGELO SEABO

MAY 2010

## Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	V
ABBREVIATIONS .....	VI
Chapter One .....	1
GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Statement of the problem .....	1
1.2 Aims and objectives .....	3
1.3 Methodology .....	5
1.4 Sources.....	6
1.5 Disposition .....	7
Chapter Two.....	9
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION.....	9
2. Introduction.....	9
2.1 Theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and Hans-Georg Gadamer .....	10
2.1.1 Ferdinand de Saussure .....	10
2.1.2 Hans-Georg Gadamer .....	14
2.2 Intercultural Communication defined .....	20
2.3 Culture.....	21
2.3.1 Dominant culture .....	24
2.3.2 Sub-culture .....	25
2.4 Communication.....	26
2.4.1 Verbal.....	28
2.4.2 Nonverbal.....	29
2.4.3 Functions of nonverbal communication.....	32
Chapter Three.....	34

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEAF AND THE HEARING .....	34
3. Introduction.....	34
3.1 Deaf Culture.....	34
3.2 CASE STUDY I.....	36
3.2.1 Communications. ....	36
3.2.2 Education .....	39
3.2.3 Health.....	40
3.3 CASE STUDY II .....	41
3.3.1 Communication.....	41
3.3.2 Education .....	43
3.3.3 Health.....	44
3.4 Analysis of case study I .....	45
3.5 Analysis of case study II .....	46
3.6 The role of language in intercultural communication .....	47
3.6.1 Language.....	47
3.6.2 Language as a skill.....	49
3.6.3 Language as a barrier .....	49
3.6.4 Language as a liberator .....	51
3.7 Understanding culture through language .....	52
3.7.1 Language and culture .....	52
3.7.2 Language and communication .....	53
Chapter Four .....	55
GENERAL DISCUSSION .....	55
4. Introduction.....	55
4.1 Factors contributing to ICC barriers .....	55
4.1.1 Language.....	56
4.1.2 Stereotypes .....	57
4.1.3 Prejudices .....	58

4.1.4 Status and Power.....	60
4.2 Lack of effective communication skills .....	62
4.2.1 Perceptions .....	62
4.2.2 Emotions .....	63
4.2.3 Familiarity .....	63
4.2.4 Withdrawal .....	64
4.3 Overcoming ICC barriers.....	64
4.4 The problem of meaning in ICC .....	66
4.4.1 Culture and meaning .....	66
4.4.2 Communication and meaning .....	67
4.5 Guidelines to improving ICC skills .....	68
4.5.1 Self introspection .....	69
4.5.2 Communication empathy .....	70
4.5.3 Listening .....	71
4.5.4 Communication flexibility .....	72
Chapter Five.....	74
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	74
5.1 Conclusion .....	74
5.2 Recommendations.....	80
Bibliography .....	81
APPENDIX.....	83

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who helped and supported me from the beginning of the writing of this thesis to the end. To my family in Botswana and the in United Kingdom a special thank you note you for your love and kindness. And to my friends also back home and here in Norway, thank you for being there spiritually and otherwise a message of gratefulness, not forgetting to mention Stavanger International Church. I extend my gratefulness to the Ole Erikson's family for proving me with a perfect home, a home away from home.

I am grateful to my supervisor associate professor Tomas Sundnes Drønen for his supervision, inspiration and encouragement at all times. I thank him for his dedication and patience during the whole two year period of my studies.

I am also thankful to my church Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, Botswana for graciously allowing me to come for studies. My gratitude also goes to the Misjonshøgskolen for giving the opportunity to further my studies at their specialised university. On the same note my thank you goes to Norwegian state for their economic support.

My sincere gratitude goes to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I have received His grace and mercy when I really needed it. Glory and Honour are His.

God bless!

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ICC	Intercultural Communication
ENT	Ear, Nose and Throat
HIV	Human Immune Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ABC	Abstain, Be faithful and Condomise
RSS	Ramotswa Secondary School
BSD	Botswana Society for the Deaf
RCDE	Ramotswa Centre for the Deaf Education

## **Chapter One**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **1. Introduction**

##### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

The problem of disability dates back in the history and the history continues in the future. Therefore, deaf and disability is not a new phenomenon and it is recorded that “the first school for the deaf was founded in 1775 in Paris” according to the Botswana Society for the Deaf (BSD). In Botswana the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) clinic was established in 1978 at Ramotswa and the Ramotswa Society for the Deaf was formed and initiated the first unit class for the deaf ([www.bsdbw.org](http://www.bsdbw.org)).

Deaf people have always lived among us but they have been discriminated and marginalized as any other minority group with or without disability. Wherever people with disability coexisted with the ‘able bodied’ they never fully participated in social, religious, economic or rather any other aspect of life. In societies where the deaf have been slow in making people aware of their situation, especially in the third world, little has been done to change their situation. And even now when they are visible in the society the problem of exclusion still persists. It is as Dawn DeVries notes, “persons with disabilities do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as their able bodied neighbours” (1994:125).

Study programs designed to educate the public about deaf and deaf culture in Botswana still fall short because the hearing community does not respond actively as in other issues like HIV/AIDS awareness programs. Deaf people continue to live in social isolation despite their saying that, “deafness should not mean loneliness” ([www.bsdbw.org](http://www.bsdbw.org)). Deaf people have lived long in places like Ramotswa village where all deaf people from around the country go for studies. Considering this background one would think that this village would exemplify more knowledge and understanding about deaf people and deaf culture, but no, not enough to bear witness. There has been no joint venture in promoting awareness about deaf culture rather the deaf do awareness campaigns themselves. The Ramotswa village could have served as a model to the rest of the nation, but regrettably the deaf community exists in isolation within

the larger community of the hearing. As the BSD relates, “hearing impairment leads to social isolation” ([www.bsdbw.org](http://www.bsdbw.org)). However, the separation that was there before between the deaf and hearing people of Ramotswa continues to today.

The apparent problem here is, there is no general contact between the deaf students and the outside community of Ramotswa. Despite that some of the deaf students very few, I must emphasize, who finish their primary school at the deaf centre get a chance to go Ramotswa Secondary School (RSS). The main concern is that there is still lack of linguistic skills between the deaf and the hearing communities. Complaints have been made in relation to poor communication and poor relations between the two communities. The situation can only become better with the reinforcement of linguistic skills. It is for this reason that I am investigating possible ways to minimise the communication gap between the deaf and the hearing.

One of the major reasons why there is little personal and social contact between the deaf students and the Ramotswa community is because of lack of knowledge about each other’s language and I am quick to say that this should not be a problem. When the deaf centre has social day, tree planting day, sports day or fundraising activities only the sponsors and workers attend to such. Whereas the community should be there and not excuse themselves on the account of language because “there is a great deal we all have to learn about the deaf and from the deaf” ([www.bsdbw.org](http://www.bsdbw.org)). The issue of language has caused further estrangement. For this reason I would say, some of the staff working at the deaf centre and other communities for the people with disabilities like Camphill School at Otse are hearing people who have not taken sign language courses but they communicate with the deaf on a daily basis. Therefore, we all need to be in solidarity and cooperate with each other.

Deaf people have learnt how to survive on their own yet they still have a long way especially when it comes to communicating with the hearing world. In the same manner the hearing people though without much to prove to the deaf people but they also have a lot to learn in order to eliminate the mental image of deaf people as disabled and not as human beings with disability. Moreover Botswana is claimed to be a majority Christian country. Therefore, Christians need to step up and try to include deaf people and accept them as part of the body of Christ. DeVries writes, “The unity of the family of God is handicapped where these brothers and sisters are treated as objects of condescending charity. It is broken where they



are left out” (1994:125). John Mbiti, the African writer, said when speaking of a person as a relational being, “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” (1970:282). In an African context which is more collective than individualistic the other person matters and it denotes that in Setswana saying, a person is a person through and with others.

Both communities should not focus on their own as a particular group but on each group to learn to have a mutual understanding and respect for one another. What the deaf need is to educate themselves about the hearing that is, the hearing have always been in power and control and therefore it will not be an overnight conversion or turning point of heart towards them. They need to know much about the hearing’s superiority culture that has been there over the years in order to have a better approach. Similarly the hearing need to learn about the other minority groups living within their communities and they also need to accept them as co-groups. By accepting them they are paving a way of including and involving them in their society. And promoting acceptance of the deaf as a minority culture perpetuates the view that deaf people have human rights and deserve equal rights and equal treatment and privileges as the majority culture. If this trend of dominance continues it poses a homogenous cultural threat to the sub-cultures, we therefore, need to address it in order to reach a stage of co-cultures, working together in harmony.

## **1.2 Aims and objectives**

The aim of this study is to make a meaningful contribution to the deaf community and the hearing community. This will be done by looking at ways of bridging the communication gap that exists between the deaf students at Ramotswa Centre for the Deaf Education (RCDE) and the Ramotswa village. The main purpose is to give both groups an education that in the long term will be a resource to the national development. My aspiration is to see both the deaf and the hearing cooperating in the issue of communication. In this study I wish to underscore that, it is important for both the deaf and the hearing to understand and appreciate each other’s unique culture and more importantly each other’s language. It is for the hearing to know that the deaf are ‘differently abled’ and therefore they are able to do other things that they (the hearing) are not able to do. Furthermore, the research aims at recognising language as an important tool in communication and more often than not there is no communication without a common language.

Language is a tool that gives people identity and enables them to express themselves. If both the deaf and the hearing reach a mutual understanding and collaborate, they stand a chance to build a stronger and better community and even a stronger nation. There is a saying that says, “United we stand and divided we fall” and unity is power. And besides one of Botswana national vision 2016 says, we need to be an educated, healthy and well informed nation. It is also better described by Drønen when writing on Saussure’s theory of language that “Language, as a means of expression used by a limited society, is based on collective behaviour and convention” (2009:5).

This research paper looks at the issues of empowerment for both the deaf and the hearing in Botswana. The main area that the deaf and the hearing need to be empowered in is education. The deaf need to be educated in order to access the resources that are already in place. If they are not educated they are not able to read and understand and therefore miss out on important information. There are strategies that the government has put in place for example, the HIV/AIDS intervention strategy of Abstain, Be faithful and Condomise, the ABC. But how does it help if the information is only accessed by the hearing, and just a few of the deaf that can understand the message?

One of the deaf activists said: “It is difficult for us to go for HIV tests due to lack of confidentiality. This is because we have to go with a sign language interpreter, which compromises our right to confidentiality”. It is particularly significant, besides HIV issues, to make sure that important information reaches everybody in order to talk about an informed nation. As such we will not leave other groups behind when the national vision is realised. It is from this point that the deaf needs to be well resourced with information to make informed decisions and to have knowledge about the issues going on around them. For it is said that knowledge is power.

On the other hand, to be able to bridge the communication gap the hearing needs to be empowered too! They also need to be educated especially on issues concerning people with disability and in this case the deaf people. They need to learn effective communication skills, hence they claim to be able and not disabled, it is for them to show tolerance and reach out to the people with disabilities with both words and deeds. There are resources that can help both parties but those at the upper hand are the hearing for they have more advantage to access them. The hearing needs to be well informed about deaf culture in order to realise and know

that there is a problem then they will be able to respond positively. With a clear objective to promote interest and increase awareness of the deaf to the hearing community of Ramotswa to encourage acceptance, which will eventually lead to learning sign language.

### **1.3 Methodology**

The method I will use in this thesis is qualitative method. Qualitative research has been described as a descriptive form of research, a way to collect information and gather data that should provide answers to the questions. This method provides details of the research in a narrative form about the subject being studied. According to Kombo qualitative method “seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied (2002:9). I intend to use the data which were collected through field research among the deaf and hearing people in the south eastern part of Botswana, through heuristic observations, formal and informal interviews. My main method for collecting data was through participant observations and interviews. This method of investigation helps in bonding the researcher and the informants. It also gives the researcher some perspective on what goes on in that particular culture (Kombo 2006:96).

Data was collected by means of semi structured interviews. I used a list of prepared questions for the interviews and the questions allowed flexibility so that questions could be rephrased during the interviews. This way the interviewee could provide further information on the issues that need further clarification. I preferred a semi structured interview form over structured interview form because the former is flexible and the latter has a standard set of questions and nothing more (Leedy &Ormrod 2005:184). The deaf were interviewed using a video camera and somebody to interpret sign language, they were interviewed through American Sign Language with a bit of home sign. When I interviewed the hearing I did note taking. I travelled in and out of Ramotswa and Otse and did also field work in my hometown, Gaborone.

The main challenge I encountered during the interviews were the following: no matter how much I interacted with people, when it comes to researching them they always get sceptical about your motives and become resistant. However, it helps to interact because in the long run, after building trust the informants may open up to you. It is significant though as Kombo mention that participating in any activity given helps reduce reactivity and makes the respondents comfortable with the researcher (2006:96). Despite the resistance at first as was

in this case, we were able to overcome the challenge and the respondents eventually opened up to me. On complementing Kombo's thought, Alan Bryman writes, it is "the researcher's need to see the world through his or her subjects' eyes" (1999:38). And Sapir Whorf adds to the above statement that how one perceives this world is actually determined by language. This is another important part in a qualitative research to keep closer a contact with the people and thereby understand them better.

Furthermore, it was difficult to find an interpreter when interviewing the deaf, sometimes I had to reschedule the appointment for another day when there would be somebody to help out. During the interviews with the deaf I had people who were not qualified interpreters because the few qualified ones that were there were constantly occupied and had no time to interpret interviews unless they got paid. This is a general problem to the nation at large and especially to those who want to interact with the deaf on an academic level. On some instances the deaf took their time to answer the questions during the interviews and that meant the interview that was scheduled to take 30 minutes went on for about an hour or more and that caused friction between myself and the interpreter. At last the challenges taught me that the phenomenon I am studying is really a problem to the nation.

#### **1.4 Sources**

Information that will be used in this thesis will be based on primary and secondary sources. I will use information from the primary source which was obtained through field research. During the field study I gathered data from both the deaf who were students and former students at RCDE and the hearing people who live in and around Ramotswa community. I have used a questionnaire to do the interviews, I had engaged in formal and informal conversations and part of the information was gained through living in the community where both the deaf and the hearing coexisted. The reason for choosing them was based on availability and initial willingness to do the interviews especially from the hearing side. How I got in contact with my informants I had interacted with both the deaf and the hearing before, and that is how I got to select them at a later stage of interviews.

The secondary sources will be the literature resources found in the library, published and unpublished materials, books, articles, journals, reports, periodicals and the internet. Some of the books will include books by Samovar, Dahl, Hall, Jandt etc. Scholars such as Saussure and Gadamer will be used to treat the issues of language and understanding in communication. Saussure focuses on the signifier and the signified. Saussean ideas have been used by communication scholars, however, his theory deem complex and man not be easy to apply in the text. Gadamer on the other hand, from philosophical hermeneutical perspective treats the importance of pre-understanding, which influences a lot of those who deal with communication studies. Considering their work and applying their theories on the primary source, they will help us understand why communication has been difficult and has failed in some instances. Therefore, both the primary and secondary sources are essential to this research paper.

The selection of informants was both formal and at random. This means that I went to the Botswana society for the deaf and there they selected for me those whom I could interview. While on the other hand I selected some of the informants. Generally both the deaf and the hearing informants I have had contact with them before, both on social and academic level. A total of six participants were selected for the interviews. The participants were both male and female. There were three deaf participants, two females and one male. For the hearing there were also three participants, two males and one female. There was no particular order followed in selecting the gender for the participants what mattered was representation from each gender. One more important thing was that educational background did not play a major role because the focus was on the general knowledge of the relationship between the deaf and the hearing.

### **1.5 Disposition**

This thesis will be made up of five chapters. The first chapter is the general introduction of the research project. It includes statement of the problem, aim and objective, methodology, sources and then the disposition.

Chapter two, in this chapter I will first present and discuss the theories of Saussure and Gadamer and show how they can help us understand intercultural communication. The following section of the chapter deals with intercultural communication defined. I then

discuss culture and in the light of culture view the dominant and sub-culture. Thereafter I look at communication and the divisions of verbal and non-verbal communication.

In chapter three, I will discuss the relationship between the deaf and the hearing. This chapter presents the findings from the field, but first I present the deaf culture. After presentation of findings I discuss the role of language in intercultural communication, then language and under language I examine it as a skill, a barrier, a liberator. And I finally look at language and culture, language and communication.

The fourth chapter presents an analysis and general discussion of the research. Here I examine the factors contributing to barriers in ICC, overcoming ICC barriers, the problem of meaning in ICC, under the problems I discuss culture and meaning, and communication and meaning. At the end of the chapter I write guidelines to improving communication skills with subheadings, self introspection, communication empathy, listening skill and communication flexibility.

Chapter five gives the recommendations to the readers and conclusion, which concludes the main points of the chapters. The bibliography, recommendations and appendix come at the end of the project.

## Chapter Two

### INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

#### 2. Introduction

Communication theorists have offered their expertise in the field of communication and have agreed and differed in various points. In the first part of this chapter I explore two theoretical approaches to Intercultural Communication. I will present the views of Ferdinand de Saussure a structuralist and modern founder of linguistics. His approach will be viewed from the theoretical framework of semiotics. Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory of *signifier* and *signified* is used to analyse the worldview encounter of the deaf and the hearing in an intercultural communicating world. From this section we will see what happens when people from different cultural backgrounds come face to face with intercultural communication moreover when one culture is a verbal communicator and the other is nonverbal. According to Saussure, "we look for the relationship between words and actions in our discourses" (1959: 5). Since his theory deals with the arbitrariness of the sign we are yet to see how it will help us understand the importance of the sign, *signifier* and *signified* in Sign language, the success and the failures in communication.

Thereafter, I will examine the worldview of Gadamer a philosophical hermeneutic approach to intercultural communication and see how it informs us in verbal and non-verbal communication between cultures. Gadamer's theory "offers a method to interpret other cultures that transcend seemingly lawful regularities to appreciate the uniqueness of individual cases" (Roy & Starosta 2010:11). To this thesis his theory is significant because it supports the moral views of the researcher and participant when undergoing research on other cultures. His theory therefore, covers most of the aspects of intercultural communication research. In order to try and manage the language problem and cultural understanding this research draws in the interviews and references them to Saussure and Gadamer's theories.

Following the theories the paper shifts the readers' attention to intercultural communication and what lies beneath it. For a better grip of ICC we start off by defining it and look at the first aspect of it which is culture. Culture as a broad phenomenon is also defined and divided into two parts, dominant culture and sub-culture. In this context we look into how a dominant

culture relates to a sub-culture with reference to Botswana hearing as dominant and Botswana deaf as a sub-culture. From culture we move to the concept of communication, which is also defined and divided into two, verbal and non-verbal communication. Like in culture, the hearing assume verbal communication while the deaf use non-verbal communication.

## **2.1 Theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and Hans-Georg Gadamer**

### ***2.1.1 Ferdinand de Saussure***

The background of Saussure, he was born in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1857 and died in 1913. He was educated in Geneva and continued his studies in Leipzig, Germany, where his linguistic competence became apparent when his *Memoire sur le systeme primitive des voyelles dans les langues indo-europeennes* was published at the age of 21. The following year he received his doctoral degree at the same university. He then moved to Paris to teach grammar and comparative philology at the Ecole pratique des hautes etudes. Saussure later joined the University of Geneva and was awarded professorship, he was professor of Indo-European Linguistics, Sanscrit and General Linguistics. With his knowledge and skills he was able to leave behind a legacy in the discipline of general and modern linguistics. Though he did not write a book, he inspired many, especially his products (students) who through their lecture notes edited the book *Courses in General Linguistics* (Saussure 1959: xi-xvi).

According to Saussure communication is possible through language because we have absorbed and integrated the system to assist us in the reality of life. This part introduces us to the most important aspect of linguistic theory of Saussure. His attention is most focused on the model of the sign which is in two parts, the signifier and the signified, which will take us to the situation where the deaf and the hearing lived together but experienced communication problems since the establishment of the deaf centre in Ramotswa. Saussure's view on linguistic sign is that the signifier relates arbitrarily to the signified. That means there is no reason to link a concept (signified) to a sound image (signifier) rather the arbitrary signs fit in well in an internal system. Therefore he asserts, every language is different and has different words for the same thing for example, "Dog is dog in English, perro in Spanish, chien in French, Hund in German" etc (Saussure 1959:1 ). He hence calls the composition of a concept (signifier) that holds meaning and reference and sound image (signified) a sign.



The word sign originates from the Greek word *semeion*, which is transmitted. But Saussure's concern of the sign is as a physical object instead of material. The arbitrariness of the sign is based on cultural convention which is according to Dahl in Pierce "common to all members of the same culture who share the same language" (1931:158). What is crucial here is how the deaf attribute meaning as they use sign language to transmit meaning to the hearing. It is in this context of the deaf and the hearing that Saussurian ideas could be explored to analyse these discourses. Applying Saussure's signifier and signified can help us understand sign language and the things implied.

Sign language in itself is a language of signs or signals as it is self explanatory word. Meanings in every language are created through interaction, negotiated and agreed upon within the community. So in recognition of the signs whether it is in sign language or spoken, we then make meaning and interpretation of them. Chandler elaborates on the signs that they take the form of "words, images, sounds, odours, flavours, acts or objects", but they only mean something if we give meaning to them. Subsequently, Pierce (1931) adds in Chandler, "nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign" (2002:17). The interpretation of things as signs occur mostly when we are familiar with what the things signify. For example, those who know English are familiar with the word 'open', this word could be given different meanings depending on where we read the sign. Now for Chandler's example this sign is on the door of a shop, it consists of:

*A signifier: the word open;*

*A signified concept: that the shop is open for business.*

According to Chandler "A sign must have both a signifier and a signified" (2002:19). Saussure however describes further this point that "the choice of the signifier is never left entirely to the signifier, the individual does not have the power to change the sign in any way once it has become established in the linguistic community" (1959:69 ). This is to say, Drønen writes, "In principle the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary, in practice, however, the signifier is fixed with respect to the linguistic community that uses it" (2009:5). In this case, "language is the best proof that a law accepted by a community is a thing tolerated and not a rule to which all freely consent" (Saussure 1959:71). This means a community has a free will to accept the laws and are that they are not fixed.

Language has always been there in the prehistoric times and it is inherited to now and therefore has been socially accepted as part of the society with its fixed convention of that society. That is why every society today has a language as a product of inheritance. It is used by people for communication on daily basis, “thereby acting as guardians of the immutability of linguistic traditions” (Drønen 2009:5). Language is fused and interpenetrated from generation to generation without imposing modifications on them. And for the fact that people are normally content with the language they have received, leaves the question of immutability questionable (Saussure 1959:71-72). In what seems to be astonishing view of language in the linguistic tradition Saussure presents a contradictory quality to language, the mutability of the sign, to show that language actually changes with time. To clarify the interdependence of the two facts, he states that:

The sign is exposed to alteration because it perpetuates itself. What predominates in all change is the persistence of the old substance; disregard to the past is only relative. That is why the principle of change is based on the principle of continuity (Saussure 1959:74).

It is deduced that language is controlled by time, which is necessitated by the social forces of change, which in the process of continuity gradually shifts the relationship between the signifier and the signified at varying degrees. The sign only follows the law of the tradition because it is arbitrary (Saussure 1959:78). On the one hand Drønen states, time secures stability of language and on the other hand it plays a role in promoting change (2009:5). In Botswana therefore, the deaf have used home sign as their first language and American Sign Language (ASL) as their second sign language taught in the deaf centres but through time both signs have been used interchangeably. In this case whatever was decided in the community of the deaf and outside as a medium of communication it is what is used.

From the analysis of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign Saussure draws a point to relations. This view carries with it the concept of identity, reality and value. “The identity of two instances of a linguistic unit is not one of substance but of form only” (Saussure 1959:110). That means the difference identifies with the identity. The language entities as concrete units cannot be accessed directly. “We see then that in semiological systems like language, where elements hold each other in equilibrium in accordance with fixed rules, the

notion of identity blends with that of value and vice versa.”(Saussure 1959:110). In language a word depends on oppositions between one signified and another, contrast between a signified and those related to it. Distinctively, here is an example of signification and value:

French mouton and the English sheep may in speech be used with the same signification: There's a sheep is synonymous with *voilà un mouton*. But their respective linguistic systems they have different values in that sheep contrasts with mouton, while mouton is not defined by a corresponding contrast (Saussure 1959:116).

The notion that Saussure brings forth here is that the meaning may significantly be the same, however, the value is different. Linguistic units are to be discovered and understood only in relational terms, and Chandler contends, “Within the language system everything depends on relations” (2002:22). Hence language as a system is based on social relations. The sound image and the concept are composed by a community in which the same language arises. That is, the value of a sign is determined not by an individual unit but the relationship between the units within whole system of signs. According to Saussure, language bonds thought and sound, which means neither thought nor sound can exist on their own. It also creates order between these ‘shapeless masses’ (1959:112).

Saussure discusses that, “Each linguistic term is a member, an articulus in which an idea is fixed in a sound and a sound becomes the sign of an idea” (Saussure 1959:113). He then enlighten us on the two natures of relations, which are syntagmatic and associative relations. Firstly, syntagmatic as relations with other items in a linguistic sequence, and secondly associative as relations, which generally contrasts with items that might replace it in a sequence (Saussure 1959: 123). These natures are not without value to our thought and language.

Saussure explains each group's value as, the syntagmatic relation is a significant relation ‘between units in a signifying system’ because it is the one used in written and spoken language, words are chained together in a linear nature. In this kind of relation the “ideas of time, linearity, and syntactical meaning are important”. In a verbal communication, the linear nature of language gives words meaning. On the one hand, “syntagmatic relations are

important because they allow for new words-neologisms-to arise and be recognised and accepted into a linguistic community” (1959:123).

Having the above statement, on the other hand, associative relations differ from syntagmatic in value. Associative offers distinguished patterns that allow metaphorical expressions (Saussure 1959:124). Thus, “the cognitive meaning ascribed to the word is thus created through associations with related terms, either as a double similarity of meaning and form, or as meaning only or form only” (Drønen 2009:6-7). Regardless of the striking difference, it is beneficial for the community to communicate in a language that is understood by others or make an effort to include those that live within the same community. Having analysed Saussure’s ideas and drawn them to this thesis, the results are, communication is difficult without language to drive it, and thus the deaf and the hearing cannot communicate without a common language. The study shows the need for both the signifier and the signified for the understanding of meaning and reference. His ideas reveals that the situation we are dealing with in the study can go either way, through his theory we can be led to communication failure due to misinterpreting the sign or we could be able to understand realities of communication.

### ***2.1.2 Hans-Georg Gadamer***

Hans-Georg Gadamer, a German philosopher was born in a town of Marburg, Germany in February 11, 1900. He spent his childhood in Beslau with his family, his interest was in humanities. However, Gadamer lived his life studying the classics. Around 1919 they moved back to Marburg where Gadamer received his doctoral degree. He began teaching and then took up temporary professorship, in 1939 he assumed the office of directorship of the Philosophical institute at the University of Leipzig then the faculty dean just a year later In 1946 he became a rector. His famous publication, *Truth and Method* was completed in 1960. He had engaged in a number of debates including the one with Jurgen Habermas, “over the possibility of transcending history and culture in order to find a truly objective position from which to critique society”. In 1971 he received one of the highest academic honor awards in Germany; Knight of the ‘Order of Merit’ Gadamer did some extensive travelling during his retirement (Gadamer 1989: xi).

Gadamer's focal point in hermeneutics offers a doorway into interpreting other cultures that seemingly go beyond lawful regularities when dealing with views on intercultural communication. In his book *Truth and Method*, his emphasis is on "the problem of understanding in the realms of art, historicity and language" (Gadamer 1989:9). His objective of the book was "to uncover the nature of human understanding". One of the issues that he tackled from a traditional point of view was the belief that, "correctly interpreting a text meant recovering the original intention of the author who wrote it" (Gadamer 1989: 87). And the observation stems from the point that the historical context of the text and the experience need to be taken into consideration for understanding. More so that "meaning is born in a socio-cultural-historic context and transmits through time, actions and expressions of individuals can only be properly understood by reference to their cultural context" (Roy & Starosta 2010:12).

As people communicate with one another they create new meaning to their cultural arena. However, Gadamer points out that, people believe that they have been shaped by a particular history and culture. And thus, "interpreting a text involve a FUSION OF HORIZONS where the scholar finds the ways that the text's history articulates with their own background" (1989: 302). His view of the horizon is; it is the vision that offers a good view of the past experiences. That means when we interpret other cultures we have to take their horizon into account as well. In order for us to understand deaf culture we have to understand their cultural experiences since understanding is based on experience. When he further explains the concept of understanding asserts that it is also prejudiced. He lays down the requirements for communicative understanding as follows:

The suspension of one's prejudices, whether this involves another person through whom one learns one's own nature and limits, or an encounter with a work of art, or a text; always something more is demanded than to understand the other, that is to seek and acknowledge the immanent coherence contained within the meaning claim of the other (1989:287).

From a general perspective understanding is founded on experience and in Gadamer's view, understanding is greatly influenced by prejudice (1989:290). Based on this view, there is no neutral stance in the issues of intercultural encounters. To say that we understand the deaf

culture therefore will not be enough from what Gadamer says. The hearing has more to offer than the question of understanding, although understanding is a prerequisite there is a need to acknowledge the otherness of the other and respect the other culture for the meaning of understanding to be claimed.

Gadamer then introduces the idea horizon of experience and to grasp fully this notion he states that “to reach an understanding is a question of being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we once were” (1989: 379). This does not affect our physical being but challenges our perception of interacting and communicating with the other. Communication that occurs with recognition of the other’s cultural understanding is ensured to be effective. In a process where the hearing attempt to understand the deaf to be able to communicate with them, their first challenge is to alter their mentality. They need to recognise the deaf group as a coexisting culture. Recognition plays a very important role in the lives of human beings. So when the fusion of our horizons melt together we are thus in the process of mutual understanding and our perspectives are changed for good.

According to Nynäs, understanding is part of being human. He continues to say that, “understanding and not understanding each other are manifested in language through the articulated experience of similarity and difference” (1999:35). The similarity and the difference, though they are part of the whole they are subject to change. I contend with Nynäs however not neglecting what Gadamer said that that part of understanding when it is realised the person will not remain the same. It is like the saying in Christianity, when the person has accepted Christ as their personal Saviour they can never be the same as they were before. So then, in all these communication understanding “language completes this fusion of horizons” where both the researcher and the informants are transformed in the process. Indeed, transformation means change moving from one state of understanding to another in time. Thus, according to Roy & Starosta, “with any change in temporal context, understanding undergoes change” (2010:12). To reflect back to the above mentioned prerequisite, it is significant to show respect to the other culture and experience teaches us so.

The cultural difference should not be a threat to people from different cultures but should be embraced as an important factor that distinguishes one culture from the other. Rather it allows cultures to understand each other and be able to communicate. A way of understanding is signified by the way we express our cultural identity. This is how it is done,

elaborated by Nynäs, “when people identify with each other there is something that comes to language: understanding” (1999:35). Since the deaf and the hearing cannot identify with each other through language they can do so through cultural difference by sharing their space and time, which will eventually make them communicate. Taking this into consideration does not mean there are no challenges. The challenges are always there whenever people from outside or from within try to understand and communicate with each other.

To explore further the issue of cultural difference this is what Dahl says, the participant responds according to ‘experience, understanding, interpretation’ and is absolutely aware of their surroundings during interaction. Furthermore, he notes, “cultural differences are therefore experienced subjectively and constructed socially” (2006:103). When people from different cultures interact they carry with them a variety of things, their experiences, perspectives, understandings and language and these in Gadamer’s term is pre-understanding. In this cultural encounter human beings through language come to know and understand each other better and broaden our perspective with new meanings (Gadamer 1975/2000). A human being relates in language and the relationship within a human being and language is in such a way that we can ‘neither consciously create nor control’. “...But we are always already oriented to a particular world by means of language” (Chandler 2002:10).

The notion of pre-understanding constitutes more than what is mentioned above, at another level it involves ‘material, social and institutional contexts are created and expressed through the language of the individuals’ (Dahl 2006:103). Future actions and community interactions are the basis for the interpretation of understanding. All of these pre-understandings is called horizon of understanding by Gadamer. In cultural encounters there are two relations to pre-understanding, one open and the other closed. In a closed relation encounter communication and sharing is not easy therefore meaningful ideas are not exchanged. However, in an open relation, obvious as an opposite of close, new meanings are created, ideas are shared. Dahl says “it is an active testing process of each partner’s subjective pre-understandings” (2006:104). The emphasis of pre-understanding pre-empt the partners. It is important because if the deaf and the hearing could create an atmosphere of sharing, creating something new for both cultures then they would establish a cultural understanding for the next generation.

From hermeneutical point of view that new meanings are established from an open cultural encounter though in space of tensions, Gadamer writes that “our prior experiences enable us to apprehend particular aspects of a situation precisely through the distance between our perception and that of the phenomenon we wish to understand” (1989: 296). Hence he states that:

...the hermeneutical has to do with bridging the gap between the familiar world in which we stand and the strange meaning that resist assimilation into the horizons of our world. It is important to recognise that the hermeneutical phenomenon encompasses both the alien that we strive to understand and the familiar world we already understand (Gadamer 1989:302).

From the above statement, understanding integrates the past into the present and therefore translates the meaning from the past into the present. It is with understanding the past that we can understand the present situation therefore be able to transform through knowledge. That is to say if our predecessors did not take time to understand and acknowledge the deaf, through our knowledge from the past we do not remain the same in the present, rather we transform in the present for a better future. Thus, the understanding comes to pass through the phenomenology of language, for language effects conversation and conversation presupposes a common language, which helps us understand the past and influence the present (Gadamer 1989:379). The continuity of history makes us establish the truth about the convergence of understanding and language, which we realise in our everyday language. That is, “since our horizons are given to us pre-reflectively in our language, we always possess our world linguistically” (Chandler 2002:11).

If then his is so, Gadamer makes an observation that is different from Saussure, he argues that the rules and structures does not necessarily come with knowing the language, but what is rather important is whether you have been understood. Underlying this statement is the fact that language is the universal medium of understanding (Gadamer 1989:389). Somehow this is a tricky one because the situation here is only one group in our study has the opportunity to learn another language that is sign language. So in this case the hearing are to learn sign language in order that there is universal medium of communication. However this is not to say they are compelled to learn how to sign but to say to power lies on them to facilitate communication since the deaf have no other alternative besides signing.



In a broader perspective of language and communication, Gadamer writes that “... to know language is to be open to participation in a dialogue with others that transforms and broadens the horizons from which we start” (Gadamer 1989: 378). In his opinion language may have limits but understanding goes beyond those limits and in such a manner that it brings together what is familiar and also alien. He clearly explains this in the following:

The fact that no one can never depart too far from linguistic conventions is clearly basic to the life of language: he who speaks a private language understood by no one else does not speak at all. But on the other hand, he who only speaks a language which conventionality has become total in the choice of words, syntax and in style forfeits the power of address and evocation which comes solely with the individualization of a language's vocabulary and of its means of communication (Gadamer 1989:474).

I agree with Gadamer on this that people exist from different cultures and the difference should be understood and be taken positively instead of it as barrier to communication. That is, sometimes fear of someone different from us makes the encounter even harder. He underscores the need for people to come together and converse because “encounters between two people from different cultures cannot be managed by applying general rules or prescriptions learned at a distance without objectifying and doing violence to the subject studied” (Gadamer 1989:446 ). In order for the deaf and the hearing to communicate they have to come together. The deaf cannot afford to remain in their cocoon forever they should come out and confront the situation whereas the hearing should do away with the mental of referring to the deaf as ‘them’ as in referring to a distant people. The way we deal with the deaf people needs to be reviewed and be given a holistic approach as Gadamer offers us that we need to be aware of our biases. We also cannot make efforts to advance our understanding of ICC and divorce ourselves from moral base. This is the theoretical approach that we have tried to reach the phenomena of understanding across cultures.

## **2.2 Intercultural Communication defined**

It is important to understand what the term intercultural communication means. ICC has been widely researched, we can therefore expect numerous definitions. Intercultural communication is fundamentally significant today as it was before when people interacted for different reasons, business, sports, religious activities, socially, politically etc. However, now than ever before ICC has become a global phenomenon but everything comes with consequences hence there are more challenges we face than before and ICC becomes more complicated. There is a sheer need for people today to understand communication and to realise that they actually do not understand and that not understanding is not necessarily negative, this is what Øyvind Dahl calls the ‘golden moments of potential new discoveries’ (2003:21). For this thesis ICC is narrowed to communication between cultures in a local community setting.

Maybe it is time to be aware of the other cultures around us and realise that there is something that we do not know and the opportunity has struck that needs to be grabbed. Since this thesis deals with two different cultures attempting to bridge the communication gap that exists between them, it seems appropriate therefore to say intercultural communication is communication that takes place between people of different cultural background. From the semiotic point of view, it “is a social and mutual act of sharing; it refers to the sharing of concepts, mediated by the use of signs” (Dahl 2003:14). By this explanation the communication meanings are negotiated through sharing rather than being transmitted. In an instance of two cultures communicating there should be an understanding in the ascribed meaning to the message for successful intercultural communication.

For Samovar, “intercultural communication involves interaction between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event” (2007:10). When people interact they have with them cultural experiences and it is for them to look beyond their own culture in order to manage the challenges of the social relations. Within the same sphere of people of different cultural backgrounds communicating, Jandt refers to it as, “face-to-face interactions among people of diverse cultures” (2004:39). People are faced with challenges in social interactions both nationally and internationally, however, they have to learn how to manage them because human movement across is not

decreasing but on the rise. For this reason the challenges of managing the changes and building bridges to curb the matter is often cumbersome.

Since the social and cultural reference is uniquely different it should not be viewed as failed communication but as a learning process in communication. For communication to take place socio cultural reference frame does not have to be the same but mutual relation between the sender and the receiver. However the deaf and the hearing have one option, the deaf is the sender and the hearing is the receiver, vice versa the result is intricate. At this point we ponder before further discussion of mutual understanding in communication between the deaf and the hearing. What makes communication between the deaf and the hearing difficult is because they do not share the same symbols. While still seeking a proper way of building the bridge of the whole intercultural communication situation the paper progresses to take on culture and communication respectively.

### **2.3 Culture**

Terms such as culture may carry with them a lot of meanings from centuries before and develop to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Culture is an important aspect of human beings, it is a part of the social system. Every community or group of people in a society have a culture that is unique and different from the other. The thought patterns, perceptions, values and customs are taught and adopted from childhood. The totality of the group that possess the above mentioned elements consciously become members of that cultural group (Jandt 2004:7). There is a whole range of definitions for the term culture depending on the situation it is suited, but in this paper we will try to confine the term to the need of the paper. We first selected the definition from Samovar, he notes:

Culture is a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival and resulted in satisfaction for the participants in an ecological niche, and thus became shared among those who could communicate with each other because they had a common language and they lived in the same time and place (2007:20).

This definition encompasses most of the elements that are needed to explain what culture is and probably a combination from all centuries. However, the given definition does not

assume to be the ultimate but rather too close to what we require in this thesis. I agree with Marcella in Samovar, he adds that, “culture is shared behaviour which is transmitted from one generation to another for purposes of promoting individual and social survival, adaptation, and growth and development” (2004:32).

Hofstede 1994 in Jandt divide some of the elements of culture as, Symbols: refer to verbal and nonverbal language. Rituals: are socially essential collective activities within a culture. Values: are the feelings not open for discussion within a culture about what is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, normal or abnormal, that are present in a majority of the members of a culture or atleast in those who occupy pivotal positions. Heroes: are the real or imaginary people who serve as behaviour model within a culture. A culture’s heroes are expressed in the myths, which can be the subject of novels and other forms of literature (Rushing & Frenzt, 1978). Rushing (1983) has argued, for example, that an enduring myth in the United States culture as seen in films is the rugged individualist cowboy in the American West (Jandt 2004:7).

Samovar emphasises on the elements of culture since they significant in distinguishing one culture from the other. His list includes the history of culture, religion as part of every culture, values has already been mentioned above and this shows how they are important to culture, how the society is organised, and language as the major element that drives all the functions of culture. These elements can help us understand the difference and similarities between death culture and the culture of the hearing when we know what culture is and what constitute culture.

As said earlier about culture it evolves through history hence every generation is guided by the past generation. The present generation live a life that is shaped by those who lived in the past and yet developing the culture for the future generation. There is religion in every fabric of culture (2007:18). Religion has rituals and beliefs that influence culture and it impacts a lot in decision making of individuals and the society. Dealing with the rituals and belief we cannot depart too far from values, values are always there in every culture, there is no society without values then that society has no life. Macionis in Samovar observes, values are “culturally defined standards of desirability, goodness, and beauty that serve as broad guidelines for social living” (2007:19). The point here is values are a code of conduct.

All cultures are organised socially, there are structures and hierarchy that guide members of the society. The nature of this social system is illustrated as such:

Social structures reflect our culture, for example, whether we have kings and queens, or presidents and prime ministers. Within our social structure, furthermore, cultures assigns roles to the various players- expectations about how individuals will behave, what they will stand for, and even how they will dress (Samovar 2007:19).

In most cultures those who are at the top of structure runs the system. They come make the decisions on how to organise the community or institutions within the society and they assign the tasks to those below them in the hierarchy. Now another feature that dominates others in all cultures is language (Samovar 2007:9). It is so because other features function better because of the message transmitted. Language is deemed important, through it culture's history is passed on; religion is taught verbally and nonverbally for example rituals and ceremonies. Significantly, language brings about the values of the society as learned moral guidelines.

Culture refers to, according to Jandt, "a community or population sufficiently large enough to self-sustaining, that is, large enough to produce new generations of members without relying on outside people" (2004:7). Hall's definition maybe interesting he writes, "in spite of the differences in conceiving the details of culture, the consensual opinion among anthropologists is that culture is not innate but learned; its various facets are interrelated so that when you touch a culture in one area, everything else is affected (1976:16). He goes on to say "cultures may be expressed through communication, culture is communication and communication is culture. In essence, any culture is primarily a system for creating, sending, storing and processing information, communication underlies everything" (1998:53).

Lastly, culture is a system with aspects of homogeneity, diversity, continuity and discontinuity, stability and instability, meaning and ambiguity, order and chaos (Gribbin 1984). Instinctively, cultures like any other organic system strive to affirm life so as to evolve and expand. Conversely, practices and forces that undercut the evolution of cultures make for the demise of such cultures. To survive and prosper, cultures therefore have to change and

evolve by promoting the forces and practices that make for change and evolution (Stingers and Prigogine 1984).

### ***2.3.1 Dominant culture***

In every society globally there exists a culture that is above other cultures, which is termed as dominant culture. Normally, this group is the one with majority rule, it is defined by the power it possesses and control within the culture. They are the ones that rules what goes and what stays in a society and other cultures usually follows. Samovar elaborates on this point, these people have historically being in power, had control and even in today's society they are still in control. When we talk of the majority rule we are basically talking about national decision makers, they control "major institutions within the culture: church, government, education, military, mass media, monetary systems etc" the list goes on (2007:10).

It is usually said that the power that the dominant culture possesses is not necessitated by figures but by their position of power that host their degree of control. Now this power can be used to either manipulate or develop other cultures. As Samovar adds that, the dominant culture is able to control most of the content and flow of cultural messages within the population. Within the various spheres of the nation, their power is felt, seen and it is imagined. Continues to say, "their power is allows them to influence what people think, what they aspire to be, how they behave, even what they talk about" (2007:10). Samovar emphasises his point, he notes:

A dominant group that greatly influences perceptions, communication patterns, beliefs, and value marks all cultures. What these groups use as the bases for their power (money, fear, the military) may differ from culture to culture but they all lead the way (2007:10).

The above statement serves as the basis knowledge of the broader picture of a dominant culture. But however powerful a culture is, the other cultures that exist within it has greater influence to the changes and development especially when considering global culturality. It is usually when the subculture make their voice heard that it impacts on the power and control of the dominant.

### **2.3.2 Sub-culture**

From studying that all cultures have a dominant culture then we deem say from dominant culture there are sub-cultures. The use of the term sub-culture has been debated over co-culture for the reasons that people in most cases belong to more than one culture. There are a number of co-cultures and specialized cultures (sub-cultures) within the dominant culture (Samovar 2007:11). We would not dwell much on the use of the term because knowing the other culture's communication patterns, beliefs and values does not necessarily mean I belong to that particular culture. On a further note that could also suggest that everybody belongs to more than one culture, which complicates the matter even more. Regardless of the preference of co-culture we proceed with sub-culture. Sub-culture, "a cultural group within a larger culture, often having beliefs or interests at variance with those of the larger culture" (Concise Oxford English Dictionary).

Sub-cultures display some way of life that has been adopted from their dominant culture. Jandt puts it this way, "a subculture resembles a culture in that it usually encompasses a relatively larger number of people and represents the accumulation of generations of human striving". They also exhibit some notable differences, "they exist within dominant cultures and are often based on economic or social class, ethnicity, race or geographic region" (2004:15). The other important elements are usually values, norms, beliefs, communication patterns, perceptions. However similar these traits are to the dominant culture they remain distinctly unique as they are learnt from their own sub-culture. One example from Samovar is, "Deaf culture provides its members with traditions, values and rules for behaviour that are handed down from generation to generation" (2007:11). In a sense it is appropriate to say sub-cultures are dependent on dominant cultures though they are uniquely different in a way.

A set of messages that a person uses to bring out their view of the outside world. In exhibiting what a co-culture is Samovar writes that they are "groups and social communities exhibiting communication characteristics, perceptions, values, beliefs, and practices that are sufficiently different to distinguish them from other groups, communities and the dominant culture (2007:11).

## 2.4 Communication

Like the term culture, communication has enormous list of definitions. The word communication originates from Latin word *communicare*, which means to ‘share with or to make common, as in giving to another a part or share of your thoughts, hopes and knowledge’ (Jandt 2004:28). Thus, the process of communication occurs when there is common understanding, when the sender of message and the receiver share oneness in thought, perception and behaviour. People’s minds converge purposely to share and receive information, mediated by the use of signs. The mind also instills values and beliefs, induce emotions and elicit behaviour in other people. The concept of communication has varied meanings in every culture respectively as it reflects the traditional and cultural values. It is a process whereby human beings respond to others’ symbolic actions.

There can be no life without communication, this does not mean people will literally die if they do not communicate. It is a reality that human beings need to communicate regardless whether it is verbally or non-verbally. People use communication to plan their lives, to relate to others by sending and receiving verbal and non-verbal messages. Samovar contends that communication, “is the process through which humans respond to create messages and to adapt to the environment and one another” (2001:22).

Communication is an unending process. There are principles of communication that elaborate this concept: communication is dynamic, symbolic, systemic, involves making inferences and it has a consequence (Samovar 2007:12). These are the major principles that are profound to understanding communication in any circumstance that we find ourselves in. We briefly discuss them and see how they assist us in the attempt of communicating with the deaf.

Communication is dynamic in nature. The process of communication is not static it is moving on all the time, ‘it is not fixed’ it is like running water, it is in action all the time. This is to say when we communicate the word does not stay like stagnant waters, but words flow one after the other. We experience the change of messages and actions whenever we interact, ‘some too subtle to notice, others too profound to ignore’ (Samovar 2007:12). With sign language we get to experience another form of silent language different from silent perceptions of other cultures such as the Japanese.



Communication is symbolic. In this principle symbols are conveyed both verbally by saying 'I am sad' and nonverbally confirm the internal state of the emotion by 'shedding of tears'. The aspects of verbal messages are often followed by nonverbal actions. The use of symbols in a culture enables them to be passed on to the next generation. However, there are no natural connections to referents, as Gudykunst and Kim observe, "the important thing to remember is that symbols are symbols only because a group of people agree to consider them as such. There is not a natural connection between symbols and their referents: the relationships are arbitrary and vary from culture to culture" (1998:169). Symbols are essential to communication.

Communication is systemic. Communication can be situational as it occurs in context influenced by the 'where, what, when and how'. That is, the location where the talk takes place, what you say and do during that particular talk at that place. The time when the conversation or dialogue convenes matters although this factor is sometimes overlooked and how many people involved in such meeting impact on the flow of communication. All these variables are directly and indirectly culturally based, which means they are governed by the rules of culture that are stated and unstated. An example given by Shimanoff in Samovar says, "prescription that indicates what behaviour is obligated, preferred, or prohibited". "Dress, language, topic selection, and the like are all adapted to context" (2007:13). These aspects of communication prevail in verbal and nonverbal communication settings and convey messages that are culturally bound.

Communication involves making inferences. It is not possible to know what the other thinks and feels at the time unless the person expresses their thoughts and feelings we cannot be explicit but only infer to their minds. Samovar asserts that, "you make these inferences from a single word, from silence, from long speeches, from simple head nods, and from glances in your direction or when eyes are averted away from you" (2007:14). This is because even in the life we live today of high technology a human being has no direct access to another human being's mind, only through speculations that are culturally and historically informed can people share similar experiences.

Communication has a consequence. This principle includes both the sender and the receiver of the symbols as they are affected during the communication process as a result. In the exchange of messages the response varies due to understanding, firstly, the probability could be that the message is difficult to absorb and secondly, the message maybe easy to understand. Samovar adds to the study that as far as the response to the messages is concerned it can be effected biological that is, given by body response. He further explains this, that, “messages that you receive can alter your glandular secretions, your heart rate, or the temperature of your skin, modify pupil size, and trigger a host of other internal responses” (2007:15-16). These aspects of communication confirm the notion that communication has a consequence.

According to Eilers, communication is “a dynamic process whereby human behaviour both verbal and non-verbal is perceived and responded to (1987:46). Just by reflecting on this definition the purpose of evoking a response may not be realised but does that mean it is not communication. There is no one word to define communication, communication can only be explained as a process that needs to be fed now and then with ongoing actions. The concept communication can be both a process of written messages, which could be visual and non-verbal. And it can be vocal, auditory, which is verbal. The behavioural human interaction is the outcome of communication process. Communication is broad and complex. Now let us look at the methods of communication verbal and nonverbal communication and see how the description of both methods give us perspective on communication between the hearing and the non-hearing.

#### ***2.4.1 Verbal***

In verbal communication the message and information is passed on orally and written. All elements associated with human communication orally expressed that is by word of mouth qualify to be verbal communication. Oral communication is prevalent in interpersonal relationships. It happens whenever people converse formal or informal, in giving speech and presentations. Verbal communication takes place almost everywhere, between two or more people. In verbal communication mode of expressions varies according to sound, grammar, symbols and syntax. These aspects constituted by words form language for verbal use. Despite the dominance of English alphabets in most languages there are still many cultures and societies that have different alphabets and symbols.

In the communicative functions of language, human beings use it to communicate their state of mind at the time, ideas, thoughts, emotions and feelings. Sometimes they do this effectively and sometimes it hits unfortunate circumstances and then misunderstood, and misinterpreted by the interlocutors. Saville-Troike in Samovar explains this as follows:

At the level of individuals and groups interacting with one another, the functions of communication are related to participants' purpose and needs. These includes such categories of functions as *affect* (conveying feelings and emotions), *directive* (requesting or demanding), *poetic* (aesthetic), *phatic* (empathy and solidarity), and *metalinguistic* (reference to language itself) (2007:12).

#### **2.4.2 Nonverbal**

Another method of communication is called non-verbal communication, where messages are sent or exchanged without using words during interactions. This form of communication has received much attention from communication scholars. Most of nonverbal messages are universal but much is altered by culture. Nonverbal communication is said to convey more meaning than words do, basically the body actions give meaning to the message, which is why this language is commonly called 'body language'. I concur with Devito when he says that, "nonverbal communication consists of all the aspect of communication not expressed in words" (1990:4). Nonverbal aspects of language comprise of signs and symbols that point to something to give them meaning.

Words in verbal messages are said to have ambiguous but meaning nonverbal communication can be an ambiguous form of communication. However, it is also said that nonverbal messages behaviour are more believable than verbal messages in deceptive communication. It is important to note that there is a distinction between nonverbal behaviour and nonverbal communication, that is, "not all nonverbal behaviour is nonverbal communication" (Jandt 2004:121). Devito adds to the statement that, nonverbal communication messages are symbolic and they stand for something other than themselves. "Communication occurs when we interpret as a message something which stands for something else. Behaviour stands for itself" (1990.4-5).

There are many ways of communicating nonverbally. Sign language is a nonverbal language in which signs and symbols are sent to convey nonverbal messages. Nonverbal communication functions in some ways that interrelates with verbal communication. When the deaf communicate with the hearing they use nonverbal messages whereas the hearing may use both verbal and nonverbal messages. Devito provides a list of these classifications: accent, complement, contradict, regulate, repeat and substitute (1990:6-7).

In spite of interrelatedness between verbal and nonverbal messages differences are always there. From the study of language and the brain it is recorded that these concepts are treated differently in the brain. The nonverbal messages are treated in a holistic and synthetic manner. That is, the message is taken as a whole and not in parts. On the opposite side the brain treats the verbal messages in discreet and analytic manner, meaning the message is broken down into parts and each part is then analysed (Devito 1990:7).

Nonverbal communication is complex. Every culture or society has their rules on how to communicate orally and nonverbally, nonverbal messages are classified into codes. They have different meanings in their different cultures (Dahl 2001:64). When we communicate nonverbally we involve all aspects except words, including voice aspects, body movement, gestures, facial expressions, space, time, smell and objects. Nonverbal communication is very significant to the deaf people because they get much of the information cues through it.

During the communication process the focus is on these body movements, facial expressions and so on to get the interpretation and meaning. The rules guide each culture on how to use the code messages. Nonverbal codes are defined by means of expressions we use when each code is communicated by a different part of the nonverbal world. We use human elements and environmental elements. The human elements include facial expressions and physical movements and the environmental elements could be big house, spacious office, location and furniture. The nonverbal communication codes that we discuss here are noted from Devito (1990:11) as follows:

Body communication/Kinesics: this code includes gestures, body movement, posture, body lean, physical appearance, facial expressions and eye contact. The messages are sent through by our bodies. Body orientation or how we face other people is also an important cue.

Facial and eye communication. This code describes the movements of the face and eyes, and what they communicate to the people. It includes facial expressions such as smiles, frowns, grimaces, yawns, pouts. Also, it includes eye movements such as the length and type of eye contact, eye avoidance, and pupil dilation and constriction.

Artifactual communication/dress code: this code includes objects we associate with ourselves and other people, including clothing, hairstyle, jewellery, furniture, cars, colours and the decorations in home and office. The expression “clothes make the person” and the prevalence of status symbols such as Rolex watches and Lamborghini cars emphasize the role of artifacts in social life. Popular books advise us to pay close attention to artifacts such as briefcases, ties, belts, and shoes in preparing for advancement up to the corporate ladder.

Spatial communication: this code focuses on the space between and among people. Personal space refers to how far apart people are while engaged in various activities. Territoriality refers to the characteristics of our environment and deals with possessive or ownership-like reactions to fixed and moveable space. Territoriality includes home and public territories, how we use them, and how we react to encroachments. Personal space refers to the areas around and between people.

Tactile communication/haptics: this code deals with touch or the physical contact between two people. Different types of touches (for example, grabbing, stroking, patting, and punching) communicate different meanings. In addition, we have different rules for touching the various parts of the body.

Paralanguage: the paralanguage code includes the sounds of the voice when producing words. We are concerned with how we communicate through changes in speaking rate, volume, voice qualities and pitch, accents, pauses, and hesitations.

Silence and the meanings attributed to it are also of interest.

Smell: this code, also called olfactics, deals with how odor communicates. Included here are body smells, perfume/cologne and other smells. There are wide cultural differences in the reactions to smell.

Temporal communication/chronemics: this code describes how our use of time communicates. Time preferences, schedules, perception of time (e.g what it means to be 'on time'), and biological cycles are all of interest here.

We have just elaborated on eight codes of nonverbal communication. Out of these codes we look at their usefulness in nonverbal communication. The first exploration is that they are descriptive in nature in how messages are communicated to us. They are also guides on how we can communicate and where we should concentrate for understanding to be realised. The nonverbal communication codes give us ample choice on how to send and receive messages in a way that we can understand and be understood. The important thing about nonverbal messages is that it can be used by both the hearing and the non-hearing. Some special attributes are given to these codes that they are more precise in meaning than verbal messages. The face is given the most attention when communicating whether in an innocent conversation or the subject is suspected of deception (Devito 1990:12-13). For the deaf their core feature of the face is the eyes, the eyes bears the vision.

Sometimes we do not pay attention to what is been communicated to us and this leads us to the wrong interpretation of the message that was intended to be otherwise. Usually the reaction or the response to the interlocutor's message is based on whether the participant likes the person or not, the result would be shown by the body movement, posture or facial expression. The communication also depends on the status of the interlocutor, the person could be of upper social class or dominant culture and possess power and control over those who he/she is trying to convey the message to. If the deaf is communicating with the hearing and there is no visual contact communication cannot take place, much attention has to be paid during communication. It is a kind of communication that does not need destruction but attentiveness in order to interpret the body language.

#### ***2.4.3 Functions of nonverbal communication.***

With the nonverbal functions we try to understand out why people send the nonverbal messages they send. Nonverbal messages are important because they provide new knowledge to people. For example in Tswana culture a person cannot give or receive with a left hand it is regarded as impolite. A person outside the culture who does not know will be learning something new. Another significant function is to regulate interaction during conversation (Devito 1990:14). There are people who are dominant than others, who do not know how to

take turns to allow others to speak. Now in a situation where the deaf is trying to communicate with hearing, the hearing talk fast sometimes loud, given that they are dominant by nature especially when dealing with a subculture then it becomes crucial to learn to regulate interaction.

It is noted earlier that facial expression is given much attention during communication since people are likely to look at the face for the reaction. However, it is an important for the deaf when communicate face to face with then since their communication sign language is visual. Their primary goal is not to see if the person has positive or negative motif but for communication to take place, to facilitate conversation in order to send and receive messages. Therefore it is reasonable enough to emphasize the need to be patient, relax and pay attention with focus on the face during nonverbal communication.

Secondary to this would then be to check if the person wants to communicate or not. Through nonverbal messages emotions are expressed whether happy, sad, fear, despair, frustration, or anger. A lot of emotions are experienced while the deaf and the hearing interact, fear is the most profound factor displayed apparently for both cultures. The main source of their fear is the language they both don't speak, the deaf do not speak and the hearing do not sign. At times the hearing person who has never met a deaf person before may experience tension and feelings of awkwardness. Nonverbal message expresses this emotion in them.

According to Devito, "nonverbal messages exercise social control" (1990:15). Thinking of the deaf who live under control of the hearing they do not need to say anything but their actions speak louder. They have the power to control other people and the power to influence the social system for better or for worse. The hearing would rather talk to exercise control but to signal power and dominance to those who use sign language for messages they would avoid contact or move away from the deaf. If we are to work on reducing communication gap we need to take verbal and nonverbal cues seriously and start making improvements to minimise frustrations and awkwardness between the deaf and the hearing during intercultural interactions and communication.

## **Chapter Three**

### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEAF AND THE HEARING**

#### **3. Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings from the research study carried out among the deaf and the hearing people in Botswana. The study focuses upon the issues in the areas of communication, education and health. The discussion starts with the description of deaf culture. Thereafter, proceed presenting the role played by language in ICC and then look at understanding culture through language. Under that domain we look at language and culture, and language and communication. These will help us understand these issues that surround the relationship between the deaf and the hearing with the hope that at the end of the paper the reader will have a change of perspective and image of the deaf people.

In an attempt to acquire full information about the deaf and the hearing interviews were conducted hence the presentation of the findings. The informants were male and female, deaf and hearing. Their order represented both the young and the old ranging from age of 20 to 40. They came from all different regions of the country but living in South Eastern region at the time of the interviews. Six people were interviewed. For the reflection of detailed data the informants included three deaf and three hearing people. The hearing respondents comprised of a coordinator at the Botswana Society for the Deaf Gaborone office, a college principal and an Ear/Mould technician. While the deaf respondents comprised of a teacher, a programmes officer and a student. The informants chose to remain anonymous, therefore, I will reference them as number 1 to 6. Analysis of the presentation of the case studies will be given at the end of the presentation. At the end of the chapter we look at the role that language plays in intercultural communication and how we can understand culture through language.

#### **3.1 Deaf Culture**

There is a great deal we all have to learn about deaf and from deaf in order to live with them in peace, love them and learn to communicate with them. Who are deaf people? We are talking about people who are termed “culturally deaf” by Samovar. These are the people are born deaf and/or the hard-of-hearing problem. In their life they interact primarily with other



deaf people who share the “same language, beliefs, values and traditions” (1991:142). Deaf people do not have specific visual distinction so they physically look the same as the hearing people. This group of people use sign language for communication with each one another. The information given by BSD is there are more than 20 000 people with serious hearing problems in Botswana. These people are often left out, excluded by individuals, families, groups and government. This leads them to isolation and loneliness. They often have little or no contact with the hearing, no access to necessary information, with no proper education and fear of visiting health care centres, with sometimes with fear of stigmatisation.

Like any other group of people the deaf have a culture and life experience that is different from the hearing people. But similarly to the culture of the hearing, deaf culture include ‘language, nonverbal behaviour, values, socializing patterns and traditions’. The definition of deaf culture given by Dr Kannapell (1985), she writes, "Deaf culture is a set of learned behaviours and perceptions that shape the values and norms of deaf people based on their shared or common experiences."

Another description of deaf culture from Dr Vikars, "Deaf culture consists of the norms, beliefs, values, and mores shared by members of the Deaf community. We believe that it is fine to be Deaf. If given the chance to become hearing, most of us would choose to remain Deaf. We tend to congregate around the kitchen table rather than the living room sofa because the lighting is better in the kitchen. Our good-byes take nearly forever, and our hello's often consist of *serious* hugs. When two of us meet for the first time we tend to exchange detailed biographies and describe our social circles in considerable depth."

At the core of deaf culture is sign language, which makes them a cultural group and gives them cultural identity. Sign language is basically visual with the use of hands, fingers, facial expressions and body movements. The focus is mainly on the stimulation of the eyes to enhance the perceptiveness of the person. Like in the culture of the hearing the deaf share culture history background, tradition and experiences, customs and values. These elements of culture make the deaf who they are a people with a unique culture.

‘Mother tongue’ is the first language of people in which they express themselves fully in communication. Though children acquire language from their parents it may not be so with deaf children. Most of deaf children are born to hearing parents and in this situation the passing on of the parents culture does not automatically occur whereas it could be vice versa

if the parents are deaf and the children are born hearing. But in the case where the children are born to hearing parents, the children have to rely on their vision and what is called home sign. They will later learn deaf culture from the deaf communities where they become enculturated through education and sign language ([www.terralingua.org](http://www.terralingua.org)). It is through social interactions and communication with other deaf children and adults that they share the same visual world view instead of auditory. Then they can settle in the environment that provides them with the culture's experiences and values and makes them feel comfortable.

In most cases deaf people who live in deaf communities have a feeling of contentment, they feel at home living with the people of the same culture. Living in the communities give them a sense of belonging where they are able to share experiences and understanding of what it means to be deaf. In Bahan's essay on the 'Seeing Person' describing deaf worldview he writes, "the seeing person requires a re-placement of focus, rather than on the deaf-ness of an individual, but on the shared qualities of deaf people as a cultural group"(1989). When they are in the deaf communities they receive cultural perspectives that provide them with cultural language and a history that acknowledges who they are. The emphasis is on the visual nature of the deaf and sign language as valuable trade mark as both these are cherished and celebrated.

### **3.2 CASE STUDY I**

Deaf issues discussed in the following areas:

#### ***3.2.1 Communications.***

There are many problems faced by the deaf community in Botswana. The deaf do not socialise and interact with the hearing community not because they do not want to but because of circumstances beyond them. Their social skill is not well developed and this ultimately impact negatively on their social development. The major challenge they face is the language barrier in communication. As a result many of them withdraw from social contact because of embarrassment when interacting with the hearing and they remain in isolation. The other challenge that the deaf face is that, today in the world that is full of con people, there are people who sometimes pretend to be deaf. This case scenario endangers the efforts of the deaf who try to fit in the society. The hearing therefore often think that these people are not really deaf but pretending. It is a problem because not only are the deaf unsocially skilled but the hearing community is no that equipped either.

Another point of consideration is some of the hearing parents are not well equipped with sign language to communicate with their deaf children, therefore, the deaf children do not know what to do when they need help. Traditionally other parents used to hide their deaf children from the community with the fear that their children would be termed 'abnormal' and this perpetuated the problem of interaction with others because they could not hide them forever. When they are finally sent to deaf community schools they get to learn sign language and English. This still poses problems because the same parents who hide their children may not know both sign language and English. Then whenever the deaf children go out of their deaf community to meet their families and other people they do not possess enough knowledge and experience to communicate with the outside world.

Those who sign to communicate are often excluded by those who speak that is, the hearing. That means the relationship between the deaf and the hearing is hindered by the problem of language. Sometimes misunderstandings happen when the two parties try to communicate without an interpreter. The interpreter is always needed when two cultures attempt to communicate without a common language. It is also difficult for both of them because they do not understand each other's cultural background hence the misunderstandings. The deaf need help from the hearing for them to be able to relate because they cannot speak but the hearing can sign if they learn to do so there could be a meaningful relationship.

There are also communication behaviour problems faced by the deaf. Often deaf people are thought to be proud just because they do not bother asking when they are in public places: restaurants, shopping malls, libraries, banks, post offices and in public transportations. Sometimes these places have dim lights, people often do not make eye contact and these cause deaf people to despair because vision to them is important. Their communication is visual and so without proper lighting vision is blurred. The hearing has to imagine a similar situation like, "being in France when you do not even know how to say *bonjour*, the French would probably think that you are a snob" by not talking to them in their language in their country. Understanding basic of each other's language though here sign language will be the medium of communication, will ease the misconception. It is not easy to notice a deaf person physically and may take a while before even realizing that the person that you are talking to is deaf. But with a good laid foundation of sign language the hearing will know at the first sign that the person in contact is deaf.

The deaf are left out in all the important decision making. Due to a minimal number of interpreters the deaf are not able to access important information. They are not empowered since the empowerment programmes are not included in their curriculum. There are no entertainment centres where they can meet with their counterparts on a social level, neither there is one at any level. If there were some common places where the deaf and hearing could meet in order to improvement their social skills as well as communication skills, we would be heading to a healthier relationship.

In communication, misunderstandings occur and they are caused by miscommunication. For example when the hearing talk to the deaf sometimes they tend shout and this embarrass the deaf and put them in an awkward position because they cannot hear. This often results in distortion of conversation and portrays a negative visual signal to the deaf listener. However, in reality any listener who is shout at could end in a similar situation of embarrassment and frustration. During a conversation if a person does not understand the communicator may repeat or rephrase what he/she said. For the fact that facial expressions are important when communicating with the deaf it is crucial therefore not to smoke while talking, chew and or obscure the mouth with hands because this impedes visualisation. It is important too not to over emphasize the facial expressions as this could change the mood of the conversation and lead to misunderstandings.

Since some of the deaf can lip read the hearing could try to speak slowly, not too slow and not too fast but at a moderate pace and as clear as they possibly can and be aware that there is no need to be loud either. Usually the deaf would like to be asked if they read lips and if they are using any hearing device such as hearing aids. Then if the person is aware of this can talk while on the side that the deaf has better ear. During a group conversation one person may speak at a time still keeping eye contact with the deaf. But of course without pre-understanding how would we have the knowledge of what to do in an encounter with the deaf.

In an instance whereby one wants to get attention from the deaf one must gently tap on the person's shoulder and when there is dim light a torch or flashing the light at a slow pace could be used. Another possibility in this digital era is to take advantage of high technology and facilitate communication between the deaf and the hearing through writing text messages

on the mobile phones. We could send mms and in 'extreme' cases send back and forth messages on computer screens, use emails, instant messengers and facebook. In the defence of using the word extreme is that in Botswana as in other African countries internet connection is not easily available especially in the villages. On the one hand electricity is also a problem and on another hand there is shortage of computers, not to mention laptops. There should be full involvement and participation of the deaf in all the decision making programmes especially the ones that involve them. Mainstreaming of services is also important because it serves better more so when you have the knowledge, that moves us to the issue of education.

### ***3.2.2 Education***

There are two non-governmental deaf centres one in the north and the other one in the south east in the village of Ramotswa. On one hand the service is relatively ok considering that the centres provide the basic needs to the deaf. They are provided with shelter, food and primary education. On the other hand the centres benefit the hearing more than they do for the deaf in the sense that majority of the workers are the hearing. Firstly, the deaf are not prepared in the centres how to deal with the outside world after completion of their study. The society has also failed to create employment for the deaf and that which was there they continue to take it. The centres are basically run by the hearing from office work to housekeeping.

The technological equipment like computers provided at the centres are underutilized because the teachers do not know how to use them. There is also shortages of human resources and this reflects the concern that the hearing benefit more from the centres. If the centres trained the deaf and empowered them enough to offer them employment after they finish their studies that would assist in reducing lack of human resources. However, the challenge is, most of the deaf have no higher education as the centre only offers only up to primary school leaving examinations. That means after completion they are basically not marketable.

What could be done to improve the current situation? There are options such as, the centres could upgrade from primary school to junior secondary school. The government could increase the deaf intake at RSS. Schools provide a context in which not only the students learn but also get to experience cultures of others and acquire valuable insights. There could be a learning centre or club where both the deaf and the hearing in Ramotswa could come together to share ideas and experiences. Education is really important to everyone. Samovar

cites a Chinese proverb about education, “learning is a treasure that follows its owner everywhere” (2007:256). We need to have a community of educated deaf just it is for the hearing people.

People could be exposed to sign language, starting with family members and friends and the society at large. In a village like Ramotswa is an ideal place to start this language as communal to both the deaf and the hearing to help permit communication. The lack of common language is often problematic in socialization and learning process. The Botswana Society for the Deaf, however, is offering sign language to the Lutheran hospital staff in Ramotswa and the general public in Gaborone at a fee, of which if it was for free it could be attracting a lot of people. And government could send different sectors there to learn at least basic signs, that is, the teachers, forces, nurses, counsellors etc. On the other hand the teachers could learn sign language at teacher training colleges and then include it in the curriculum and teach it in primary schools in order to groom the nation at an early age. There is a need to educate the deaf at a higher level than they have now then that would be one way improving the situation because there is no greater way to invest than in educating ‘the nation’.

The deaf will be left to go on uninformed and unempowered for a long time and this will not be justice to them. They are not involved in human rights activities so they continue to lack behind. Despite the national vision 2016 that says all the citizens should be educated and well informed, there is nothing said about educating people with disability and the deaf nor improving the situation they are in today. In life everybody face challenges the male and female deaf face challenges in the centres too. They are both vulnerable as humans but the females suffer more hence the need for deaf woman empowerment.

### **3.2.3 Health**

Health care is an essential system in human life. Health care providers take care of the patients when they come for hospital visit. On normal occasions it is patient and doctor and/or nurse one on one basis. However, at times in Botswana there is an English interpreter for those who cannot understand English if the doctor is not Motswana or does not speak Setswana. Now with the deaf on the one hand it has become a norm that there is always an interpreter with them whenever they seek medical attention and this has become a concern for them. On the other hand the health care systems have shortcomings in helping people with

limited language efficiency. During emergency cases interpreters are not there to assist. Effective communication between the health providers and the patients is important because miscommunication and misunderstanding can cause serious problems, like, “misdiagnosis, risky procedures, unnecessary treatments, and needles suffering” (Samovar 2007:285), even fatal results.

The problem is not just on the issues of having or not having interpreters but availability of nurses, doctors or any health care providers in a health care system to recognise the need to sign. Deaf people and other people with disabilities are faced with many challenges to say the least but being disadvantaged because of language is huge. Failure to care for the patients in dire need due to communication may amount to civil rights violation and the deaf will make noise saying “we demand quality patient care for all!”<sup>1</sup> said a deaf person.

With the issue of HIV/AIDS being a concern in general to the public in Botswana, this information reached the deaf late because only one programme aired on national television is interpreted except the English News bulletin. When a patient visit the hospital, the patient would like to build trust first with the doctor but this requires effective communication. It is a feeling the deaf miss that doctor–patient bond to feel safe and to freely share their thoughts. The concern is also that there are no technical devices in the hospitals and somehow it hinders access to health care visit for the deaf. There is a need for the health care providers to learn intercultural communication skills including sign language, it may be difficult but it is possible.

### **3.3 CASE STUDY II**

Hearing issues about the deaf discussed in the following areas:

#### ***3.3.1 Communication***

The main problem for the deaf is communicating with the outside world during and after completing their studies, out of their homes and sometimes even at home. This of course stems from the fact that language is a barrier between the deaf and the hearing people. The other problem is that the deaf centres only provide primary education, then some of them go to RSS and after that there is no senior school for them to go for high school education. They have no opportunity to further their education and this alleviates the problem of no developed

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview with informant 1 23.06.2009

skills and it become hard to find jobs. The problem is also with us as hearing people we are not applying ourselves by trying to learn to communicate with them in the language that they understand and when we do is when we want to make fun of them. We are not going an extra mile to make them fit in our communities.

For the fact that the hearing still do not understand and appreciate the deaf culture and their language as they traditionally did that in itself cause friction between the parties. Traditionally the relationship was that of pity and sympathy but to today it has slowly changed and improved. If the hearing could make an effort to understand the deaf it could make the relationship better. As one of the respondents said “I belong to two both cultures, switching from one to the other is easy”<sup>2</sup>. The relationship between the deaf and the hearing is difficult solely because of the language difference. And one possible way to have a working relationship is to encourage the hearing to learn sign language in order to effect communication. The hearing continue to ask, “What is sign language?” The emphasis given at the starting point of learning the culture is that the hearing need to understand that sign language is the mother tongue for the deaf people and they should not try to change that and they should know that it is not Setswana or English, it is Sign Language.

The hearing are comfortable in their zone and they are not aware of what is happening around them. They assume that the deaf are easily angered and therefore aggressive. It is a natural feeling for a human being to get frustrated whenever there is miscommunication and this is what happens to the deaf during an attempt to communicate with the hearing. Sometimes the hearing also get the same feeling when they cannot get through to the deaf person they are trying to communicate with. Lack of common language for the two parties seriously cause ill feelings and arouse misconceptions about the other. The misconceptions are created by the fact that there are not enough facilities where the deaf and the hearing can meet and learn about each other’s cultural background. We therefore need institutions that can integrate people with and without disabilities to learn from each other.

There are a lot of areas where the deaf are not included. There is no policy in the government that has provision for the deaf. They do not feature anywhere in the world of business and economics. We are not doing enough as the hearing in the areas of sports and recreation. In the area of HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness. Botswana has done much but has there has

---

<sup>2</sup> Interview with informant 2 29.06.2009



not been any much material that caters for the needs of the deaf. The essential necessary information often reach the deaf late and this has become problematic in the area of communication. The media coverage has not catered for deaf in the issues that concerns all citizens especially Botswana television that is easily accessible to almost everyone.

The issue that we are dealing with is, we do not have baseline information to know what the extent of the problem of deafness is before we can even say who should respond and how. We need to inform ourselves first about the actual problem and the seriousness of it before we can find ways of responding. Although we have lived with deaf throughout history, it has never been made a priority to know and understand them, it has always been about us and them. We have the power and capacity to effect change. It is therefore time for change, we should find ways of understanding and learning how to use both words and signs in an appropriate manner that will be useful to those who use sign language. We have a choice and they do not have, we have the authority and the resources on our side that can help us. There should be more networking to try and resolve the problems faced by the deaf especially the communication problem.

Public awareness about the deaf and deafness in Botswana can be intensified and not be left for the deaf to do it alone the hearing could join hands. Different governmental and non-governmental organisations could lobby in their department areas and engage more in networking nationally and internationally. The necessary should be put in places such as work areas, banks, hospitals, shopping malls, post offices etc. There should be social interactions and spending more time with each other to know more about one another. We can simply include them in our social gatherings such as weddings, parties, birthdays, then we will be walking on the path towards reaching out to them and perhaps even realising the national vision goal. They should feel accepted and included in our communities.

### ***3.3.2 Education***

The services provided at the deaf centres are fairly enough, that is, everything that is supposed to be done is done because the service can never be enough. There are always challenges when people deal with people and this case we deal with people disability, so we cannot begin to talk about enough services. The deaf who have been to the centres are more content compared to those who have not hence the fairly enough part of the service provided. However, like any other institution there are other needs that are not met. And looking at the

percentage of the deaf in the country we can never say the services are adequate. There is shortage of human resources and there are some necessary equipments for the deaf that are not in place.

If not what could be done to improve the current situation? There is a need to increase awareness about the deaf and sign language in order to get more people interested and involved. It is important to renew equipment that is already there or get the new ones especially the computers. More importantly there is a need to have the staff that has knowledge of the computers or train the staff that will also be able to teach the students in the centres because nowadays everything is computerised.

It is said that if the hearing are faced with problems in their own 'world' what more of those who cannot speak the same language. A reasonable amount of work has been done to the effect of education in general in the country but more effort need to be put on what the deaf have. For the mere fact that there are two institutions it is one response to the educational needs of the deaf but there is still room for improvement. Largely churches and NGO's have been handling education for the deaf where government was partly helping despite the long enjoyed free education for the hearing. But government should start planning to provide educational services for these citizens too. People with disabilities like the deaf should not be denied citizenship rights, what is provided for the citizens must be provided for them as well.

If these problems are not realised there will be a section of the population that is forever left behind. We should strive for a holistic vision of development that strives to bring all people along. It is a pity that these people are still left behind after 43 years of independence and successful economy.

### **3.3.3 Health**

The burning issue with health care system began during the time of Botswana's fierce campaign against HIV/AIDS. The former president was spearheading the campaign. There were messages and information everywhere in every kind of media. The deaf were also encouraged as every citizen to go for testing that is when a lot of people came to be aware of the deaf because of the complains about confidentiality at the testing centres. And the in the whole area of health confidentiality is still a big problem for the deaf people since those who are supposed to assist cannot sign and that means a third person has to be there whenever the deaf visit the hospital or the testing centres.

Language with its complexities is a barrier and seems to be the burning issue at the health care centres nowadays especially in the emergency situations. This problem is not going away anytime soon, therefore, the health care systems have to devise some plans on what to do when people like the deaf arrive on emergency without an interpreter. Another factor that has to be taken seriously in the health care centres is the cultural diversity in nonverbal messages. These have been mentioned earlier, the facial expressions, body movement, touch space and time etc. But when we are dealing with the deaf we cannot stop mentioning the importance of these elements of nonverbal communication because they apply in all areas of communication even more so in the health care context.

In a health care setting the facial expressions maybe perceived to employ that the patient is in pain but in some cases the facial expressions maybe impassive. Not all people are able to show their emotions entire not even the deaf that is why the medical practitioners have to be aware of this diversity in people. Most of the African cultures people avoid direct eye contact and this could be problematic in deaf culture since eye contact indicates attentiveness. Again with pre-understanding a lot of mishaps can be avoided. Another sensitive aspect is that of touch. Although touching may differ according to the situation, some people would prefer the doctor to touch them for physical examination, this may also be uncomfortable especially for women. For the hearing women it is different because they are able to tell the doctor but with the deaf women they cannot be lying on the examination table and signing to the interpreter how they feel at the time.

### **3.4 Analysis of case study I**

From the beginning the deaf had accepted the situation they were in dealing with the problems of communication, education and health by themselves as all other subcultures do but now things are rapidly changing. They no longer want to be silent about their issues, they are speaking up. There are activists who are advocating for a better lifestyle for the deaf and for the better and improved facilities at the centres. The issue of having higher education for the deaf is one of the burning issues since investing in education is the best investment. The hope is that when more deaf people become educated they will enforce the capacity building of deaf network, they will become more competent and efficient in communication. Their language and communication skill will develop more. They will be empowered in their self esteem, confidence and social skills and thereby relate better with the hearing communities.

As evidenced by the findings there is still lot of areas where the deaf are left out since the revolution is still at its infancy stage. Emphasis is put on a number of different things that could be improved such as proper positioning of lights whether natural or artificial for better vision. If it is during the day a person should not hide in the shadow but reflect but be on the bright side. In the evening and night there should be enough light in room in case the person can lip read and are hard of hearing.

When the people speak and write they should do it clearly for those who can lip read. The use of jargon should be avoided even in 'normal' (a lack of better word) cases for better communication and understanding. The deaf can use cell phones to communicate through text messages. The hearing could try to speak slowly, not shouting and use signs, gestures from home sign. There are better ways to attention of the deaf rather than shouting at the person who cannot hear, if the deaf person is close by then you call for attention through touching on the shoulder or flash the light when possible.

In order to achieve the goal of accepting and affirming the deaf culture the hearing people should be willing to learn sign language in the schools as other languages of different cultures for example French. There are government junior schools that have French in their curriculum and it is also offered at the university. Through sign language the hearing will be able to understand deaf culture and deaf people's experiences in life and this will translate into respect for them.

### **3.5 Analysis of case study II**

There is a deeper realization by the hearing to the problems faced by the deaf. The social interaction and communication made the hearing people look at themselves for the first time and saw that nothing has been going on between them and the deaf. It has been the deaf trying to make effort to reach out and not us. There is hope as to when we commit to working together and willing to learn from each other. We start to see the deaf as people who have needs as we do, the need of love, care and respect. The Botswana vision says 2016 is a year we celebrate prosperity for all and prosperity should include people with disabilities. It says we should be educated, well informed, tolerant and tolerance means tolerating people who are differently abled from us. Information, education, resources, access to resources are key factors in helping us achieve the goals of the vision. For the deaf there is no way they can

realise the ideals of the vision unless we make the information accessible to them. We have understood that we do not understand.

### **3.6 The role of language in intercultural communication**

In the following section we present language as a key player in both culture and communication. Language plays a key role in all forms of communication and certainly in all cultures. Samovar expresses it as the “basic tool by which humans make society function” (2007:166). It is the most obvious and especially salient element of culture and the first question in human encounters is how am I going to communicate in a different culture that does not speak my language? And normally the answer is, hopefully the new culture knows English. In the case of the deaf the answer is do they know sign language and there is no other option. When different cultures meet the first singled out difference is language as it either draws the people together or drives them apart. It therefore makes intercultural communication and interaction difficult.

In a verbal communication encounter speech style can create misunderstandings whereas in nonverbal communication nonverbal behaviours can mislead the receiver or participant to miscommunication. Then we proceed to look at the role of language in a culture that has one option to communication only nonverbal communication as opposed to the hearing culture that has both options of verbal and nonverbal mode of communication. Before analysing the role of language we first look at the meaning of language.

#### **3.6.1 Language**

Language is an art of signs and symbols beautifully created in mind to permit human beings to communication. The primary means that make human communication possible. It is “a set of symbols shared by a community to communicate meaning and experience” (Jandt 1995:93). These symbols vary from culture to culture and the help preserve or transmit that particular culture. This definition incorporates the art of words and signs for a set of people to make meaning out of it. It consists of verbal and nonverbal cues, which gives the decoder meaning if decoded well in the speaking and non-speaking world.

According to Chao language is a “conventional system of habitual vocal behaviour by which members of a community communicate with one another” (1968:1). Chao further underscores characteristics of language as follows (1968:1-3):

Language is voluntary behaviour. Behaviours are normally done without saying a word like leaning over to in order to hear properly what is been said or long exhale signifying exhaustion.

Language as a form of communication is entirely arbitrary in its relation to what is communicated. A word means something as meaning is given to it by the sender though the relation is just arbitrary.

Language is a convention, a tradition, a social institution, that has grown through living of a large number of people who carry on the tradition. Language is used to keep it from extinction and obviously for humans to communicate and preserve culture.

Language is conservative and resists change. However, language evolves with time and space. The older generation would like to keep it the way it was but the younger generation makes the changes more rapid.

Language consists of a surprisingly small inventory of distinctive sounds, called *phonemes*. The sounds are distinguished through the ear and are used in language.

Language is learned, not inborn; it is handed on, not inherited. Children acquire language from their parents and the one that the community speaks.

These characteristics of language make us realise the importance of being able to use language appropriately and understand where it comes from and its form as a communication tool. Sapir-Whorf theory of language is:

Language is a self contained, creative, symbolic organisation which not only refers to experience largely acquired without its help but actually defines experience for us both by structure and by our unconscious acceptance of the language' s ability to influence all of our experience by shaping symbolic meaning of us" (1978:101).

Samovar underscores the meaning of language as, "an organised, generally agreed upon, learned symbol-system used to represent the experience within a geographical or cultural community" (1991:49). It is through language that the society is given shape and unifies those that have agreed upon it and passed on to the next same group. But only those who

those who speak the same language are brought together otherwise the rest are excluded. Therefore language has dual purpose, it can unify and influence and at the same time drive the people apart. It is pointed out that language is a skill that is learned and acquired from family and society (some of the deaf learn from the deaf communities) through time and experience be it verbal or nonverbal. And as mentioned above it can serve as a barrier between different cultures attempting to communicate. Finally, language can liberate and unify those who come to know it. People who meet and realise they both understand the same language suddenly are filled with a sense of freedom and liberation.

Language is so fundamental to our being that it is hardly possible to imagine life without it. It is so tightly woven into our human experience that anywhere on earth two or more people gather together they likely will be communicating in some way (2007:164).

### ***3.6.2 Language as a skill***

Human beings are the only species that can speak that is why they have language. As Samovar notes, “people can talk, other animals can’t. These skills make Homo sapiens a uniquely successful, powerful, and dangerous animal” (2001:126). This skill is sometimes judged by the way they speak, how they do it, others do not speak but do the technique of signing that cannot be heard but can be seen, but what matters is, it is a language and it makes human beings communicate. Cartmill in Samovar writes, “Without language, we would only be a sort of upright chimpanzee with funny feet and clever hands. With it we are the self possessed master of the planet” (2007:166). It is a gift that makes communication possible if we are clever enough to breakdown the coded message in order to understand each other. Language is a skill that some people are limited in due to variations in its cue, for example deaf people are limited in spoken language and the hearing are limited in sign language.

### ***3.6.3 Language as a barrier***

Language can be a serious problem in intercultural encounters that leads to frustration at times. In some cases people are discriminated against just because they do not speak the same language or that they have a different accent to the dominant culture. While in other instances it can be a barrier if it is forced on people, that is, when used as nationalism. At times it is like

the dominant Setswana culture wants to push the deaf hard to speak, that is, when we make no effort to talk to them and instead they make effort to talk to us, which does not work out very well. When language is forced on people they are likely to rebel, for example, before independence in South Africa in 1994 black people viewed English as the language of the oppressor and strongly resisted the use of it (Jandt 1995:120). For a similar reason we cannot make the hearing people to learn sign language but make them recognise not knowing it could be a barrier to communicate with but maybe with time interest could develop.

Communication breakdown happens due to language proficiency that causes misunderstanding and miscommunication and the result is frustration even despair. At any given context and culture when people speak the language that you do not understand, that you are not familiar with, when they are speaking about you or not the feelings of uneasiness are evoked. In the process of communication it is possible to say something and the meaning be interpreted otherwise. Samovar cites that even in a workplace employees who do not understand the language in use maybe suspicious of what is being said, thinking that perhaps they are talking about them (2001:215). Therefore, not only the deaf get frustrated but the hearing also get frustrated for not understanding sign language and also not understanding each other especially family members and friends who know someone who is deaf. The deaf then bear the consequence of not being able to speak and become lonely and social outcast unless they join the deaf community.

Intercultural communication can be hard and challenging at the beginning. Most people have it difficult when confronted with the situation of different people and different environment. Brown attests that “the inability to speak the language of the community in which one lives is the first step towards misunderstanding, for prejudice thrives on lack of communication” (2001:154). And lack of knowledge of the language of the community slows down human interaction. To that Samovar adds, “lack of language skills is a strong barrier to effective cultural adjustment and communication whereas lack of knowledge concerning ways of speaking of a particular group will reduce the level of understanding that we can achieve with our counterparts (2001:293). I agree with the statement of Samovar, this happens in most if not all intercultural encounters, during interactions when the local people realise you do not speak their language they slowly and immediately withdraw from you. What more if you are deaf, you are completely shut out.



When there is communication breakdown interpreters maybe used. A lot of times interpreters are used when the deaf are communicating with the hearing. However, interpreters may complicate things as well, they may decode the message wrongly and impart the meaning that was not intended by the sender. According to Samovar, “it is sometimes difficult for members of diverse cultures to articulate their symptoms and feelings in the non-native language” (2001:254). In a case where confidentiality is a concern the probability that the person in need will actually reveal his/her problem is half. For example, in health care setting the deaf need to have an interpreter because none of the doctors or nurses can sign and the possibilities here are, the patient may not say exactly what is wrong. Secondly, the interpreter may not interpret precisely what the patient has said and this does not only jeopardise the issue of confidentiality but may lead to wrong prescription also.

#### ***3.6.4 Language as a liberator***

English is one of the most widely used languages in the globe. Most of the African countries have English as their second language (Samovar 2001:284). Generally knowing more than one language is an added advantage in the world today. It is suggested that if you are going to stay long in a place that people speak a language other than yours try to learn their language it makes life easier, “a common language can unify” says Jandt (1995:125). We need to be liberated from the mentality of dominance in order to be able to see the other side of the coin. The situation of the deaf and the hearing reverses the system the hearing need to take heed and face the reality, we need to be aware and make an effort tolerate the other language as different to make the difference.

In order to facilitate an understanding between the two cultures, according to Gudykunst, we have to:

Be aware of the characteristics of the culture within which you will be interacting, learn the values, beliefs and modes of behaviour unique to the culture and try to master the basics, the necessities to get by (1984:293-4).

Obviously Gudykunst was referring to the people who use spoken language for human encounters, but still even if it is the encounter between the deaf and the hearing the same principles of values, beliefs and behaviour apply.

### 3.7 Understanding culture through language

#### 3.7.1 *Language and culture*

For a culture and its people to function there should be a language for that particular culture. The differences between cultures are noticeable through language. Language plays a major role in every culture and impacts more than what meets the eye. The relationship between language and culture link people together into a social unit. We take for granted that since every culture has language therefore people have the same thought pattern and ultimately they speak pretty the same way (Samovar 2001:141). It is not that way mainly because of cultural diversity, even within the same culture the thought pattern differs. I agree with Samovar when he says “...language may not determine the way we think, but it does influence the way we perceive and remember and it affects the ease within which we perform mental tasks” (2001:141-142). To know the language of another culture is probably the best way to know their culture.

Lewis rightly writes, we need a longer period to become fluent in another language of a different culture then what is significant in doing so is to learn the basic facts about the country and cultural traits together with the language (1996:89-90). As it has been observed before, this point cannot be overemphasized. We need to learn the basic signs in order to be able to communicate with the deaf and through continuous interaction we will eventually understand each other. The fundamental thing is to learn the basic symbols, rules and signs.

According to Jandt there is no one who is born with a language. Language is acquired learned through cultural background and experience. It is then passed on from generation to generation. As a child you do not only learn the culture but also develop cultural identity (1995:93). In addition to that, “language passes on the cultural tradition of the group and thereby gives the individual an identity that ties him/her to the in-group and at the same time sets him/her apart from other possible groups of reference” (Dick 2001:234). Through language we are able to see the cultural signs that symbolises a particular culture and specifies an individual’s belonging to that cultural setting. During the growing period the individuals learn their role in the family and the community. Hence knowing the language of the other culture makes it easier to relate to the people and the context (Eilers 1987:75).

Language develops with time as culture changes due to globalisation. Language reflects the same culture therefore. Warms in Samovar notes, “language does more than just reflect

culture: it is the way in which the individual is introduced to the order of the physical and social environment” (2007:170). Culture influences language and it is evidenced by behaviour and thought pattern. People’s behaviour and thought patterns are seen when they gather together to share ideas, to give and receive messages. And Dahnke observes that, “culture affects how messages are sent, how they are received and how they are interpreted” (1990:223). It is said in Sapir-Whorf’s theory, “our own reality is determined by our language” (Eilers 1987:77). Our cultural background always echoes what we say and the use of the language echoes our culture.

### ***3.7.2 Language and communication***

Language is as important in communication as it is in culture, it makes the society function. In communication it can be used either verbally or nonverbally. We look at the significance of it in both ways. It is considered the key element in human communication; people use it to communicate with each other on a daily basis. Language can be expressed through writing, speaking and signs. Eilers explains that people communicate by speaking the language, others write while others use sign language. The verbal language is first expressed by speaking and writing it is done to try and preserve the messages spoken (1987:75). The same goes with the nonverbal it is expressed through gestures and written to preserve it for the next generation.

The relationship between language and communication is suggested by Bonvillian in Samovar as:

The primary means of interaction between people. Speakers use language to convey their thoughts, feelings, intentions and desires to others. Language links interlocutors in a dynamic, reflexive process. We learn about people through what they say and how they say it; we learn about ourselves through the ways that other people react to what we say, and we learn about our relationships with others through the give-and-take of communicative interactions (2007:164).

Language makes us see the other context different from our own. We cannot be without language otherwise we would lose our interconnectedness with humanity our uniqueness from other animal creatures.

It has been pointed out that, “in its basic form, language is a tool humans have utilized, sometimes effectively, sometimes not so effectively, to communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings to others” (Samovar 2007:166). Sharing ideas with others broadens insights and horizons. As it has been indicated before individuals and groups engage in a relationship of give and take communicative interaction and this leads to growth and maturity. The concern therefore is if the deaf and the hearing do not get involved in that kind of relationship each party is denied the growth and maturity.

Culture is preserved mainly through language, and also largely used to transmit it to new generation. The community is held together by language shared identity thereby preserving the community’s heritage. According to Samovar, “language provides linguistic indicators which may be used to reinforce social stratification or to maintain differential power relationships between groups” (Samovar 2007:166). From this point of view we can deduce that language serves a source that unifies the society. However, according to this study it has not been used to unify individual deaf and hearing rather has driven them apart as it functioned as a barrier. It has not established the social interaction between the two, which means people have not used language effectively.

The codes used in languages differ from culture to culture, which makes it difficult to decode during communication. Some of these codes are explained as ‘vocabulary and syntax’. According to Eilers, “codes are culturally defined rule governed systems of shared arbitrary symbols that are used to transmit meaning (1987:76). Language enables cultures to communicate but there has to be an understanding of what is been communicated, that is, the receiver of the message must be able to decode it. Failure to decode the message correctly and understand what it means may lead to negative consequences such as miscommunication. It is only when a communicator is familiar or fully aware of the structures and meanings of the language can communicate effectively (Eilers 1987:82).

## **Chapter Four**

### **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

#### **4. Introduction**

Much attention has been given to the theories and the issues surrounding intercultural communication. We will try to find applicable methods or potential solutions that can be employed to reduce the communication gap that exists between the deaf and the hearing. While seeking for solutions we incorporate the findings from field research with the theories of Saussure and Gadamer. During general discussion we look at the barriers to ICC and explore the possible ways of overcoming them. Thereafter we tackle the problem of meaning in ICC. When you know the root cause your communication problems you stand a better chance to vastly improve and succeed. At the end of the section some guidelines to improve the manner in which we communicate will be offered.

#### **4.1 Factors contributing to ICC barriers**

There are assortments of reasons to the problems that impede efforts of communication between cultures and one of the ways to resolving the problems is firstly to acknowledge that there is a problem. Some of the communication barriers are organisational/institutionally based and individually related according to Chelule's model, but they also occur in combination. Such communication barriers are listed as language, stereotypes, prejudices, status and power to mention a few. Communication problems often occur in organisational structures whereby those who hold higher positions do not consider those below them. More often than not the message would not reach those at the grassroots level even if the message was intended for them. Relating to Saussure communication can only happen through language, but it has been difficult and sometimes it fails as we often fail to relate the words and meanings in our discourses. Saussure's theory of the signifier and the signified can therefore help us understand.

#### ***4.1.1 Language***

The reasons for not effective communication could then be that the organisations and institutions use an approach that is difficult for ordinary people to understand. Some of the problems are people use obscure language and that is not easy, not clearly expressed and could be misunderstood and misinterpreted. And other times the people use the language that is foreign to others, which make the message less effective and less important to those who receive it (Chelule 2007:40). As reflected in the field study sometimes the hearing would bring information to the deaf mainly written message that is in English and many of the deaf people have had only primary school education. And even when they are still in the deaf institution foreign language like English does not come easy to them, for example when the intervention strategies in the fight against HIV/AIDS were all over the media. Only a few deaf were able to read, understand and make use of the information, but to the rest this information had no importance. Saussure speaks of meaning and interpretation of the signs, that we all use signs for communication. But for communication to take place we have to recognise the signs, interpret and make meaning out of them.

In institutions like Ramotswa centre for the deaf, the deaf students study and live there. The students only get to interact with the hearing people that work in the centre. When they are outside the centre they are met with many challenges because they are not able to speak and the people they meet in the streets are not able to understand sign language. Sometimes they go to the shops on their own without sign interpreters. When they get there they are not in a position to say what they want and there is communication breakdown. Their option would then be to point at the item they want or to go inside and take the item for themselves. Moreover this causes the deaf embarrassment, which in turn make them withdraw from making contact with hearing outside the centre. This limit further the communication process between the community and the deaf students because Ramotswa has not yet accepted the deaf community, and the hearing community has not yet acknowledged the communication problem that exists between the two communities.

#### ***4.1.2 Stereotypes***

Some people in organisations institutions are stereotypically guided in relating to the groups they serve, the example of Ramotswa community shows the belief that the deaf belong in the centre and not outside. Samovar points out that, “cultural generalizations must be viewed as approximations, not as absolute representation” (2007:31). Most of the time generalisation is taken as absolute representative of the culture under ‘scrutiny’. Usually the first information that is passed on to people is held on to as the truth, for example, traditionally the deaf were known to be disabled and therefore of no use in the society. For a long time we have believed this information as the truth and it has prevented us from seeing their abilities as people and not as deaf. Not even the church in Ramotswa has taken the initiative to integrate and interact with the deaf that is how far we have gone as the hearing in Ramotswa village.

Little or no knowledge of deaf culture has led to lots of negative labelling to deaf people. As Lane (1988) says in Samovar, “deaf people have been labelled contradictorily by psychologists and other medical professionals as being aggressive and submissive, disobedient and shy, passionate and detached” (1991:147). In my study, the hearing have similar perceptions to the ones attested by the psychologists and other medical professionals. With the study of other cultures and of the deaf culture in particular there is recognition to the inconsistency of allegations and labelling of the deaf people.

Stereotype is a challenge to ICC. What role then does stereotype play in ICC? During the research the study was conducted within the people of the same race, however, this does not mean that there is no stereotyping in their relations. Stereotyping occurs everywhere, it is a picture of the other that we paint with thin paint. I concur with the view of Taylor and Porter in Samovar that:

Most of us are reluctant to admit that we are engaged in stereotyping. We could rather prefer to believe that only racists and bigots stereotype other groups, yet all of us are guilty of stereotyping. Stereotyping then, is a universal process at both the group and individual level (2007:319).

In a sense not admitting to stereotype aspects may lead to negative stereotyping, which negates negative attitude and may cause prejudice. When stereotyping is negative it limits potential communication success and jeopardizes human interaction both locally and internationally. Samovar observes, “being open to new information and evidence and being aware of your own zone of discomfort” is a big step towards reducing stereotyping (2007:323).

From the field study we have learnt how the hearing perceived the deaf traditionally as disabled, our perspective therefore has to be altered. The deaf people however do not feel disabled but perhaps suppressed by the dominance of the hearing. Tradition and culture changes with time, the same for language and so should our worldview. According to Saussure, “what predominates in all change is the persistence of the old substance; disregard to the past is only relative. That is why the principle of change is based on the principle of continuity” (1959:74). When we experience change our outer and inner existence space come together and our memories are remodelled in a personal reflective manner.

The conditions may, however, slowly be changing. There are some deaf students that get to interact with the hearing students at RSS and there are some students at RSS who have formed a club where they can learn sign language. In the church, however, instead of integrating the deaf and the hearing there is a newly built church for the deaf. What kind of message is the church sending to the community, to the nation? The church is one institution that can be really stereotype with its customs and traditions. Being aware of aspects of stereotypes can enable us to overcome stereotype acts and understand deaf people better and this will be a guide to effective intercultural development plan (Samovar 1991:148).

#### ***4.1.3 Prejudices***

Moving on from stereotypes we advance to the concept of prejudices. “Deeply felt prejudices, usually brought about by stereotyping, can cause serious communication problems” (Samovar 2007:323). According to Dahl, “prejudice is usually conceptualised as a negative attitude or an attitudinal disposition to favour or disfavour someone” (2006:16). Prejudice is not something to be overcome but a precondition for understanding, a point of departure for apprehending difference. Gadamer views human prejudice as something not to be avoided but “as the basis of all understanding”. He continues to explain that prejudice is ‘prejudgement’, it is a basic human condition with both positive and negative aspects and to



assume that all prejudices are “illegitimate and misleading represents simply a prejudice against prejudice” (1989:270).

In hermeneutics, rather than projecting our prejudices onto others in an attempt to reduce distance, “other people become a means for us to correct our understanding (Blasco 2002:37). This is regarded as positives side to understanding others’ perspectives. All persons have some degree of prejudice and they go through a process of projecting it for them to gain understanding. Prejudice used in an attempt to understand people different from us is not necessarily bad although the communicator should be able to differentiate between productive and unproductive prejudice. Gadamer adds to the above mentioned point that communicative understanding requires more and he writes:

The suspension of one’s prejudices, whether this involves another person through whom one learns one’s own nature and limits, or an encounter with a work of art, or a text; always something more is demanded than to understand the other, that is to seek or acknowledge the immanent coherence contained within the meaning claim of the other (1987:87).

What is been expressed here could be related to our study, it is the first step to try and understand each other’s culture and beyond understanding is acknowledgement and respect for each other. Understanding is the door to other possibilities, it is a learning curve. It is noted from the study that the relationship of the hearing to the deaf that was there was that of pity and sympathy but the conditions are improving with time.

People with prejudice target particular groups with the negative mentality that they have acquired from before. Feelings of hostility and negative attitudes become apparent in those who are prejudiced. And Ruscher in Samovar notes that these feelings are often “displayed through facial expressions and peripheral nonverbal behaviours” and “when expressed verbally, examples might include group labels, hostile humour, or speech that alleges the superiority of one group over another” (2007:323).

Some of the feelings that the deaf expressed were that they have endured hostile humour from their counterpart. It was also noted by the hearing that the only times they have tried to communicate with the deaf was when they wanted to make fun of them. One of the hearing

informant said, “We have taken it for granted that they must understand us”. When a minority group is perceived to be of no value in the society in a way they are being discriminated. This prejudice attitude is wrong because no human being can be without a purpose and the more people understand this, the more there is a chance to change their belief and attitude. Both stereotypes and prejudices can be used as resource of pre-understanding of other cultures, however, precautions are needed to minimise damaging effects.

#### ***4.1.4 Status and Power***

The other communication problem in organisations and institutions is status and power. Status in organisations is important especially in Africa but sometimes it is used for the benefit of the individual. According to Giddens, “power is an important feature in all social interaction because it both sets the limits of and affords the possibilities for human action. It is the origin of all that is liberating and productive in all social life as well as all that is repressive and destructive” (1981:51). In some instances individuals would keep the information to themselves or even use their status to reach to the top while stepping on their subordinates.

In keeping the status human beings use power to keep things the way they were and the way they would want them to be. Samovar explains that “power usually means controlling not only your own life but also the lives of others” (2007:329). This means that the people in power, the dominant people are able to influence others to better intercultural encounters and communication if they use their power positively. These are the people who are in a position to grant privilege or disadvantage others.

Gadamer speaks of I-Thou relationship, that a dialogue between the researcher and the participants can empower all the parties but the relationship has to be genuine. It is a problem when power differentials come into play when the sub- culture is faced with dominant culture in a hierarchical society. If there is going to be change in the way of life for the deaf in the nation it has to come with policy makers. Thus, most often the deaf find themselves without a voice to their counterparts as they continue to be controlled and be under political and social power. And as the research study has shown, until now there is nothing in place for the deaf and the people with disability in general, all that is happening is through the help of non-governmental organisations. The deaf centres get donations from the government, it is not like in governmental sectors such as schools and hospitals where they are allocated funds, for

they are included in the NDP. There is a need of institutions that can integrate both the deaf and the hearing with facilities that are user friendly to people with disabilities. And one participant said all people have disabilities others are visible and others are not, which means the institutions will benefit all, that is, the deaf and the hearing.

When one group continues to live practically under the dominance of other there hardly can be power sharing. With the deaf having less education than the hearing there are no available jobs for them. At the centre in Ramotswa and the community at large these are places which could potentially create jobs for the deaf but they do not do that. Generally the government and nongovernment organisations have not done much in trying to create employment for the deaf. One deaf said, “the jobs that are there at the centres are filled by the hearing as they run the centres” and this informant expressed that even housekeeping, they basically do everything.

Now power can be misused whether it is physical or mental given that power comes in different kinds. The stereotyping and prejudice happen because of the power of the mind, that is, the belief that the deaf are disabled, though it has been like that in the prehistoric times it falsely objectify them. However, if the policy does not come from the decision makers it is not an easy task to ‘disempower’ the mind. In this regard the deaf remain powerless in the society. Charon in Samovar elaborates the notion of powerless as follows:

To be powerless is to be helpless in relation to others, to be determined by the will of others. Powerless means that one lacks the ability to influence the direction of social organisation, including society. Powerlessness brings dependence on others and exploitation by others, if they choose (2007:330).

The context of the deaf and the hearing fits the explanation because only one party in this case has control during interaction, the hearing could choose to interact or not to. Basically the hearing are at the upper hand in directing the society in both intercultural communication and interpersonal encounters. The root of the problem is one, language. In its basis as a power system it can unite the deaf and the hearing together but in this instance it is clearly dividing them. When the deaf still operate on what has been decided for them it is a sign of imbalance of the society or the nation, a sign of powerlessness.

Cultures that are different from ours if not attended will remain foreign to us ‘as the birds in our garden’. They are strange by virtue of their familiarity, they are creatures that add life, movement and colour to our daily lives. We can observe, name and classify them but we would never dream of communicating with them. They will remain yet another potent reminder of hegemony that separates supposedly objective knowledge from experience and encounter and thus delinks the process of understanding from human subjects (Blasco 2004:39). Cultural understanding like language understanding has proven to be a difficult assignment to intercultural communicators and interpersonal encounters. However it is possible to reduce the language difference by bringing awareness of deaf culture and sign language through academic institutions and encourage people to learn sign language.

## **4.2 Lack of effective communication skills**

### ***4.2.1 Perceptions***

When it comes to communication barriers that are individually related there are a number of factors, and these include perceptions, emotions, listening, familiarity and withdrawal.

Perceptions vary widely according to the world view of the individuals influenced by their cultural backgrounds. In ICC when the sender sends the message he/she assumes that the receiver receives the message as it was intended. World view as a cultural variable affects meaning in communication. Because of the diversity of world view in attributions of meaning in communication conflicts between the people are created. Conflict assumptions are often caused by, for example not specified time or lack of definite time or misunderstanding that leads to wrong conclusions. At times appointments are set without specific time, it may be said that, ‘we meet in the afternoon, I am coming soon’. And not many people are good at managing conflicts (Chelule 2007:44).

Hearing people should not be misinformed because misinformation can be erroneous, thus, if they have met one deaf person who have behaved in certain way should not perceive that all deaf people behave in the same way. As with the hearing and every other human being each person is a unique person as sign cannot be perceived to be the same. Signs are important part of sign language because the deaf basically use signs to communicate. We use symbols to help us relate to others but as it is symbols do not mean anything but they stand for something else (Samovar 2007:28). In Saussure signs are to be discovered and understood only in relational terms.

### **4.2.2 Emotions**

Emotions are part of every individual but if they are not managed well they can cloud our judgement and hinder communication. During communication the sender's feelings influence encoding message but as well the receiver influence decoding hence the possibility of misinterpreting the intended message. In response to the need of communicating with deaf the hearing come with emotions of sympathy, guilt feeling and shame. While it is not easy to do away with emotions, with practice it is possible to control it.

When the deaf and the hearing fail to understand each other interpreters can be used. Interpreters help in bringing the 'second hand' message to the receiver. The problem is there is a danger of misinterpretation. The other major concern about interpreters was raised whenever the issue of health care was mentioned. They have cried foul about the issue of lack of confidentiality when they visit health care centres because they have to be accompanied by an interpreter. There are a lot of emotions involved when going for HIV test, before when they do pre-counselling and after the test when they do post-counselling. One deaf participant clearly said, "It is difficult for us to go for HIV tests due to lack of confidentiality. This is because we have to go with sign language interpreters, which compromises our right to confidentiality"<sup>3</sup>.

### **4.2.3 Familiarity**

Familiarity in itself is not a problem as it is natural to be attracted and drawn to what and whom one chooses. There is a proverb that says "birds of the same feathers flock together" (Samovar 2007:316). People feel comfortable with those that have the similar outlooks and would be closer should they realise they speak the same language. In a more globalised world people are generally drawn to each other by language and race, but locally language and ethnicity play a major role. As we have already mentioned familiarity is not a problem but it becomes a problem when people discriminate and exclude others on the basis of their difference. Usually the minority cultures experience the discrimination and exclusion leaving them in isolation. The deaf have suffered exclusion in silence for a very long time at the hands of the hearing. This problem leads those who are excluded to withdraw from intercultural interactions and sometimes leaves them with a feeling of anxiety.

---

<sup>3</sup> Interview with informant 3 07.07.2009

#### **4.2.4 Withdrawal**

When people feel excluded they withdraw into their cocoon. Withdrawal is a problem in the sense that it hampers progress not only of intercultural but interpersonal as well and if one does not retrieve from it could have negative effects. Flewelling in Samovar rightly writes, “Neither province, parish, nor nation; family, nor individual, can live profitably in exclusion from the rest of the world” (2003:179). It was noted in the research study that deaf people do not need to be excluded from the society just because they are not able to speak the language of the hearing. Withdrawal has been the rule for the deaf people and now they are saying it is time to come out of the cocoon and face the outside world. There are other means that are beneficial than withdrawing from contacts that can bring the deaf people and the hearing people to co-relate. We should be able to interact with the deaf at different gatherings like churches and meet them socially at “parties, birthdays, and weddings”.

#### **4.3 Overcoming ICC barriers**

In organisations and institutions it is significant to regulate the flow of information. The organisation has to see to it that the message is received and understood by the recipients. It is not necessary to overload people with information especially if they do not understand it. Language serves as the universal medium of understanding and the understanding of transmitted meaning is crucial when communicating. Deaf people do not want to be forced to speak or lip read when they are reluctant to do so and it is important respect their decision in that manner.

The sender therefore should be able to give attention to priority information for example HIV/AIDS or malaria prevention strategy information whether vocally or in writing should be in simple terms. The sender should be able to determine if the receiver was able to understand the message and do follow up on the message that was sent to a larger population (in situations like the example above). Feedback may be given verbally and non-verbally (Samovar 2007:345). In work situations there are complains that sometimes they are passed over and not given the jobs on the basis that they do not speak the language of the majority. Samovar reports that, “often hearing people disregard a deaf person’s opinion in favour of those espoused by hearing people about deaf people” (1991:148).

Simplifying messages is another way of overcoming communication barriers. This is done by avoiding use of jargon and ambiguous words while communicating. The use of simple and

understandable language is often an effective means to reach others. Once the language is simplified it allows others to participate in the dialogue and that transforms and broadens our horizons. At this juncture the deaf need people who can engage in a dialogue with them in order to empower and significantly uplift them and eventually acknowledge them as co-culture. Gadamer asserts that it is important for ICC researchers to help promote the 'Other' culture, and he says, "while the universe admits to some intercultural regularities, also abounds in context and individual difference" (1989:17).

In today's context where people travel more than they did before, people need to shift from particularity towards universality. A person who has moved beyond his/her cultural familiarity is able learn and appreciate what is different from his/her own. For Hall, to learn another culture is to enrich and enlighten oneself though the process could be cumbersome at the end it is rewarding. He continues to say, "one of the most effective ways to learn about oneself is by taking seriously the cultures of others. It forces you to pay attention to those details of life which differentiate them from you" (1959:32). From this insight the hearing could try to discover and understand the difference and that there is something more than ourselves, something beyond our own culture. When are fully learned we about deaf culture and sign language we will know that sign language is not English or Setswana but an independent language.

Messages should be carefully done with concise sentences to reach the level of the intended audience or group. Understanding mediates meaning from the past into the present thus fusing what is familiar to that which is alien from Gadamer's theory. During communication process the receivers of the message should listen actively, they need to concentrate on what is been communicated to them. Listening to the words and visualizing the feelings help in dealing with the problem. It is important to refrain from communicating when one is emotional until one calms down. People have to move from being sympathetic and empathise more. In some situations non-verbal cues could be used to emphasize points and/or actions can be used to reinforce the message. During a conversation a person should be able to see the reaction of the other person before taking a final decision. This is to ensure that the message is accurate and relevant to the situation.

#### **4.4 The problem of meaning in ICC**

Meaning is expressed in understanding of the message intended. There is no precise word to explain what meaning means and most often than not meaning carries with it a sense of ambiguity. As a result ICC has incurred a lot of problems due to increased cultural encounters. Holly and Stuchlik assert that, “meaning is solely in the eyes of the beholder that is, meaning is the way in which the individuals make sense of their world, and that individuals can only make sense of their world in relationships with others”. Culture functions in many ways and in these ways meaning is constructed at varying degree to fit the context. We can never assume that we fully understand what we communicate or what is been communicate to us. The description here shows that when communicating with the deaf much is required to release meaning in an attempt to make them understand and we cannot claim to be fully aware of what we say to them.

To explain the magnitude of the problem of meaning we are facing, I concur with Hall when he writes:

There exists in the world today tremendous distortions in meaning as men try to communicate with one another. The job of achieving understanding and insight into mental processes of others is much more difficult and the situation more serious than most of us care to admit (1959:29).

##### ***4.4.1 Culture and meaning***

Cultures use symbols, which have different meanings for different people. There are similarities in symbols, however, what the symbols signify is understood according to the context. One of Dahl’s interventions on culture and meaning is as follows:

Culture is the shared codes that make communication possible for a group of people. It is based on negotiated meanings constantly created and recreated in human interactions. In the process of communication people create and ascribe meanings to the signs used, words, language, behaviour and events.

Cultural behaviours are acted out consciously and unconsciously because they are natural behaviours learned at an early age from ones surroundings, family, friends and neighbours.



However, when different cultures meet it is only natural that the feeling of scepticism arises between the two unfamiliar cultures. In cultures that express messages through verbal cues like the hearing their message is usually reinforced by nonverbal cue messages, which are at times portraying different meanings to the outsider if not decoded properly. Like in any culture the deaf have their own culture. In their culture communication is basically signs, nonverbal cues, it is depended on vision what is expressed by mainly by the body and facial expressions.

The social perception and context of communication is instilled in the person from childhood. Culture therefore influences the way we see reality. According to Samovar, social perception is a process in which our social realities are constructed by attributing meaning to the social objects and events we encounter in our society (1991:80). In a situation whereby we encounter another culture, social perception gives way to acknowledge or not to acknowledge. The meeting of different cultures then may prompt the other to learn a new language.

#### ***4.4.2 Communication and meaning***

It is said that there are more differences in meaning than in the vocabulary and the differences in meanings contribute to isolation of cultures. In the process of communication there is a sender, the message is transmitted in a coded language, then the receiver who decodes the message. Saussure says signs are transmitted to all members of the same culture who share the same language. This model focuses on the transmission of signs. For those of different culture, in order for them to understand the message shared understanding is created through shared meanings in symbols since meanings are in symbols. It is however said that during the negotiation process across communication and culture the scale of differences in understanding rises.

One example in the study is a case whereby language is a barrier for communication between the deaf and the hearing, there is lack of understanding between this two and this causes the deaf to withdraw from communication. On the one hand the deaf may be withdrawing from the hearing but on the other hand they are willing to negotiate only if the hearing are willing to enter into a meaningful dialogue. Acknowledging the misunderstandings, differences in meanings will not be so harmful to the efforts of communication. I agree with Dahl when he

underscores that, “at times we get different meanings but diversity of meanings make life exciting and communication necessary, leading to joy of cultural diversity (2003:18-21).

According to Fiske “relationship not only makes us human beings sensitive to realities in our external natures, but also sense of ourselves, our relationships, and or reality in which are produced by the same cultural process” (1990:121). We cannot only be sensitive to nature and culture and be less sensitive to other cultures that coexist with us. The way the hearing relate with the deaf should define meaning, in other words meaning should be understood through their relationship. For example the misconception between the two cultures affects attribution of meaning therefore should be eliminated and formulate new cultural perception.

#### **4.5 Guidelines to improving ICC skills**

The need to come up with most basic plan to improve ICC skills is to produce successful and effective communicators in a diverse world. The reason being there is an experience that different cultural backgrounds have a potential of impeding communication to the extent of making it impossible (Samovar 2001:1-2). The study of ICC by far has grown tremendously and is still growing. Due to the world population growth the mobility of people also has grown for different apparent reasons, therefore, there is increase of intercultural encounters and interactions for both the hearing and non-hearing world. Samovar points out that, there is increased diversity and this diversity need not be threatening because everybody is kind of looking for a better life socially and economically (2001:301). From this statement, it maybe said that improving communication between the deaf and the hearing is to build a mutual relationship and to create better communicating cultures not threats.

Following the reason of increased intercultural encounters we need to develop intercultural competence. According to Korhonen in Allwood, “developing intercultural competence is a slow, gradual transformative process consisting of foreign language studies, intercultural training and hands on experiences of other cultures and their people” (2003:153). To be perceived as competent implies that you are adequate, sufficient and suitable, that is, appropriate to the situation. A communicator should have competence in sending and receiving messages (Gudykunst 1984:6).

The critical dimensions of communication competence are effectiveness and appropriateness respectively. This is to judge the ability of the communicator on how much knowledge they have, the cultural and linguistical knowledge. Then with the knowledge does the interlocutor have the skill to perform and being mindful and tolerant to other cultures. And thereafter to what degree does the communicator hold the level of understanding, the sense of inclusion and common sharing. All these are judgements of competence that occur within a relationship (Wiseman 1989:3-4). Communication competence when acquired could help to see the possibility of reducing the communication gap between the deaf and the hearing, and to make the hearing understand that learning another is expanding one's horizon.

There are many important issues to address before talking effective communication and our communication skills are tested everyday as we meet other cultures as evidenced the need to improve our competence. We need to bridge the cultural and communication difference. More of the guidelines to improving communication skills include self introspection, communication empathy, listening and communication flexibility among others as we offer possible solutions to problems inherent in ICC. These points should be taken as starting point for greater communication improvement. We should know our strengths and weaknesses in order to appreciate, accept and be ready for change. Whether we are at home or abroad we encounter cultures that are different from us and we engage in intercultural communication and our communication skills are always examined (Dahnke 1990:119-120).

We need to inform ourselves first about the issues at hand before we can talk about finding solutions to the problem as noted from the findings. However, it does not help to diagnose the problem and not make a cure or solution. The Persian poet Sa'di writes in Samovar, "whoever acquires knowledge and does not practice it resembles him who ploughs his land and leaves it unsown" (2001:279). Very practical statement indeed. The results from the field study though, do not show that we are at the stage of implementing but that we are still in the process of equipping ourselves. We can however maximise our potential in ICC by applying these guidelines during our encounters and interactions.

#### ***4.5.1 Self introspection***

It is important to first and foremost know and understand yourself before trying to know others. As a communicator be aware of your cultural values, beliefs and your linguistic rules

and then continue to learn about another culture. The rule in self introspection is simple, ‘start with yourself’. There is a saying or a proverb that says charity begins at home. This applies to both cultures of the deaf and the hearing. In addition Baldwin writes in Samovar, “the questions which one asks oneself begin at last, to illuminate the world and become ones key to the experience of others (2001:279). The skill gives the communicator the capacity to communicate respect to other people from different cultures. As for communicating with the deaf people it would help to acknowledge their culture and language it is a sign of respect. It is also recorded that to respect to deaf people means “the willingness to communicate directly with the deaf person, rather than turning to another person standing nearby to secure help in communicating” (Samovar 1991:148).

However, engaging in a dialogue is a right step in the right direction, we start with theories then move to implementing them. There is a lot of practice that the deaf and the hearing need to do to become effective communicators, it starts with each individual asking themselves how am I doing with my linguistic/communication process and the whole group of people, which is the society. It is no harm to be more interculturally competent as the world rapidly diversifies. As Jandt puts it, this will put you in a better position as you take part in the challenges facing the people and the world at large (1995:398). Dedication and determination is required to obtain the goal of effective communication.

#### ***4.5.2 Communication empathy***

To improve your communication skills one needs to develop what is called communication empathy. The ability to show empathy is significant in ICC because empathy is deep word and difficult to practice. The skill can only be developed in time, nobody can be able to feel what the other person feels but can only imagine it. We can only imagine what the deaf people go through in life not being able to choose who to communicate with but only restricted to those who know sign language. Learning empathy requires attention and concentration to the person in the situation, and when dealing with the deaf people also one needs to pay much attention and concentration, this could appear strenuous to the person. The best we can do to develop empathy is to stay focused, learn the cultural behaviour, the values and customs and understand the way things are done so as to cultivate a way to interact (Samovar 2007:344). Thus, the stress and anxiety of intercultural encounter can be overcome by communication empathy skills.

Samovar offers one lesson of improvement when he writes, “empathy can be increased if you resist the tendency to interpret the other’s verbal and nonverbal actions from your culture’s orientation” (2007:344). Lewis contends to the lesson when he writes that in order to capture the idea of empathy one should first be done with self evaluation and have shed those ‘principal cultural idiosyncrasies’ and accept the cultural differences and positively build on them (1996:313). However, empathy is a reciprocal act, that means the deaf people have to be forthcoming with their nonverbal behaviour so that they do not appear needy but rather strong so that the hearing are able to read their internal states of affairs more accurately. This will help us develop communication empathy than sympathy when dealing with the deaf people and become successful as intercultural communicators both locally and internationally.

#### ***4.5.3 Listening***

Like empathy listening skill is a hard one. It is one of the skills of communication that is a barrier and probably not the most recognised as such and for many people it is a difficult skill. It is such an important skill that few communicators possess though it is a significant trait in communication especially when your language proficiency is basic. In different contexts listening is perceived differently. It is easily misunderstood and misinterpreted. In communication a good listener offers verbal and nonverbal encouragement and support to those who are uncomfortable in communication between cultures.

People preoccupied with personal problems have it hard listening and perhaps even comprehending. Anxious and stressed people are also unable to listen properly especially when they meet unfamiliar people. This thought coupled with the idea that deaf people are easily angered and they are aggressive leads to unnecessary miscommunication. The thought of communicating with the deaf can be tantamount, likewise the deaf would be frightened to some degree when they are to meet with the hearing. Samovar adds that “all of us find differences threatening to some extent” (2007:318). The deaf people however, demand the right to be heard and not be misunderstood and misinterpreted without being given a chance.

As mentioned elsewhere listening is culture bound and cultural differences in listening comes in two categories, direct and indirect listening. When communicating to another person be aware of their response, whether they are getting the message or not. The skill enables you as a communicator to be effective to know when to talk and when to stop. You are also enabled

to know when it is necessary to respond when you are in control of the situation. Lewis notes that cultures use their tongue differently, “some use it, some hold it, some bite it” (1996:95). For the deaf people direct listening is significant and in their case I call it listening with the ‘eyes’ this is where attention is most needed because their listening is visual.

Another step to show that the communicator is in control is to take turns while talking and one speaking at a time then listen to the response. There are other cultures that consider interruption during conversation being rude (Samovar 2007:344). People should be patient with one another when they are engaged in a conversation because of the differences when speaking. Some people speak faster and others slow so it is essential to give others a chance. It is noted that sometimes the hearing get impatient with the deaf people. Those who have little knowledge of sign language they often try to complete sentences or explain things better. And those who have no knowledge of sign language they sometimes jump in during the conversation and continue as if the deaf people are not around. While we can all sing but we cannot all talk or sign at the same.

#### ***4.5.4 Communication flexibility***

It is a good quality to show the capacity to be flexible and to be flexible in communication is best. This is a matter of being open minded about other cultures. The ability to adjust and be able to tolerate each others’ different culture is a great achievement. We should be able to tolerate the ambiguity of the cultures that are different from ours and not try to impose our culture on others. Ruben and Kealey in Samovar observe, “The ability to react to new and ambiguous situations with minimal discomfort has long been thought to be an important asset when adjusting to a new culture” (2001:292). We should be able to embrace new ideas and be receptive to new way of thinking. In addition, in the long run we will be able to have better relations with the deaf people.

In communication flexibility we are encouraged to be accustomed to tolerate ambiguity, that is to be more open to deaf people. For example, “ the hearing person who does not know sign language will become impatient and demand to know what the conversation between two deaf people is about” (Samovar 1991:149). However, the very same impatient person would carry on conversing with another hearing and not bother explaining to the deaf what they are talking about. Often hearing people do not think about the things they do to the deaf people, the things that they would not want to be done to them. The outcome of trying to know more

about what we do not about the deaf people can be enriching and broadening our insights and affecting our perception in a positive way, we therefore need to let our minds be flexible for more knowledge to flow in.

Communication flexibility is a technique that helps if one is exposed to a new culture in the outside world or at home. Flexibility is a great characteristic of communication. Being flexible in communication opens doors for negotiations. A task that attempts mutual understanding between communicating cultures where language is a problem. It can apply in any cultural setting since it adapts well in new context. Acquiring this technique and knowing how to use is for life time because it does not only allow you to adjust to local cultures but globally as well.

Samovar reminds us that, it is important to remember that deaf people just like us have had experiences and have communication patterns that are different from us. Therefore, “being flexible, hearing people should not take offense if such behaviours are demonstrated” (1991:149). Rather, this should be appreciated as cultural diversity and diversity should bring us closer to each other. Communication flexibility is an incredible technique when used appropriately, when people from different cultures, the deaf and the hearing people are willing to engage in a dialogue. It is important to strive towards improving and ultimately achieving these skills for effective communication as they are to assist in the efforts to bridge communication gap between the deaf and the hearing people.

## Chapter Five

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusion

This research paper has applied the theories of semiotic model using Saussurean ideas and hermeneutical expression from Gadamer in exploring the cognitive aspects of intercultural communication. The perspective of Saussure's idea of the arbitrariness of the signifier and the signified was seen to be connected from the historical forces of culture and communication. While the perspective of Gadamer dwells in the idea of pre-understanding and the outcome of horizons that have melted together. After the presentation of the theoretical perspectives and how they should be viewed in analysing the intercultural encounters of the deaf people and the hearing people, we then looked at the cognitive repertoire of both counterparts.

By first presenting a definition of intercultural communication, the section proceeded to look at definitions of culture. Under the heading of culture, subdivisions of dominant culture and subculture were discussed. I have argued that due to globalisation, global populations has grown therefore increasing the rate of intercultural interactions both locally and internationally. This makes it important to study intercultural communication to be aware of the challenges of not being able to communicate with your next door culture because of cultural differences.

It has never been easy to deal with definitions of concepts and it has either been so in this paper. There is hardly a term that has one word to definite it, the terms are mostly described and explained to be understood in contextual terms such as culture, which encompasses a lot of contextual and cultural meanings. Every group of people has a culture that is different from the others. The paper also investigated the issues that are prevalent in dominant cultures, which is the hearing people in this case. The hearing are the majority and they rule in the country and in the Ramotswa village. They have the power and are in control and everybody else has to follow. And the records from the study show that they are dominant because of both the power they possess and by the number in figures.



Within every dominant culture there are several subcultures, and the subculture we are dealing with in this paper is the deaf culture. This subculture emulates some of the aspects of the larger culture, however, it remains uniquely distinct. The deaf culture is majorly distinguished from the hearing culture by sign language. Despite notable difference they have elements like values, traditions, beliefs and experiences as the dominant culture has. However different subcultures still depend on dominant cultures.

After dealing with culture at an adequate length we shifted the focus to the phenomenon of communication. Communication is a huge term in the field of communication studies. People communicate verbally and nonverbally within and across cultures. When the deaf people communicate with the hearing people their means of communication is basically in nonverbal messages. In communication people share and receive ideas, information, thoughts hence communication is reciprocal, it is not a one way process but involves more.

Verbal communication takes place among the hearing people, they mainly use words to converse. This way of communication involves sound, grammar, symbols and syntax. On the other hand nonverbal communication is a form of communication that is expressed without words. However, there are some ways that verbal and nonverbal communication is used interchangeably. Most of the verbal messages are automatically followed by nonverbal messages. People tend to use their bodies consciously and not consciously when communicating. Like in verbal messages the nonverbal messages have rules that govern the culture that use that kind of communication. With regards to nonverbal communication both the deaf people and the hearing people can use it. Their meanings differ from culture to culture.

People tend to ask if deaf people have a particular culture? A definition of deaf culture was presented explaining what makes deaf culture a culture. And that like any culture they have experiences, beliefs, perception, traditions that are passed on from generation to generation. They have sign language as the most distinguishable feature that makes the culture unique. The values of deaf culture were briefly elaborated in how much socializing mean to the deaf people and what constitutes the deaf traditions. Both these aspects highlight a unique view and entice the reader to want to know more about the deaf culture. There were great variables noted in the ways the deaf socialize and value their traditions.

The thesis has further described the situation between the deaf people and the hearing people as seen from the arenas of communication, education and health. The information presented was collected from the field research by interviewing the deaf and the hearing people. Communication issue was discussed at length. There are number of problems noted that hinders communication between the deaf and the hearing people. However, language was mentioned as the major challenge facing the intercultural communication particularly the deaf and the hearing from before and still continuing to today. Other challenges were poorly developed social skills, lack of well built self esteem and confidence. The major contributory factor to this was said to be not having a lot of deaf people with much higher education.

Furthermore, in the discussion about education we found out that the majority of the deaf population in Botswana has primary school, and few among them can read and write 'good' English. By considering this information it means a very small population of the deaf has a higher level of education. The deaf students who live in RCDE are having only lower education no wonder they need empowerment and capacity building when they leave the centre in order to integrate well with the hearing people outside their community. The problems encountered by the deaf in the health centres were noted to be more than what we see. They are faced with a frustrating situation every time they visit the health institutions. Thus, there are only two options for them and these are either to endure going with an interpreter or secondly, though this may seem a little far-fetched, have the medical practitioners learn sign language. However, the deaf people are hoping things to change slowly but surely.

This paper has investigated the role of language in intercultural communication. We first defined the concept of language and then analysed the way it functions. Language is a symbolic system that shapes and explains the meanings of communication and influences the experiences of cultures. Language in both verbal and nonverbal forms is learned and acquired, it is not inborn. The role of language as a skill is an aspect that credits us humans that we have a special gift that differentiates us from the rest of the living creatures. This skill is usually judged by the way people speak, the technique of signing, however, what is significant is the opportunity to be able to communicate. The analysis moved further to the part of language as a barrier. It has been realised and proven beyond reasonable doubt that language is main cause of limitations in ICC. This study has shown that language is a barrier between the deaf people and the hearing living in Ramotswa village. Due to lack of language

proficiency people are limited in communicating across cultures and when they do it is very minimal and to some extent it is impossible.

Consequently, being limited through language raises the potential risks of miscommunication and misunderstanding. There are times when interpreters and translators are regarded, however, they also have potential of misrepresenting and misinterpreting when they are mediating between two parties. It is a dilemma because they are useful and on the hand they have shortcomings. On the other side of the coin is language functioning as a liberator. To know the language of the culture you are dealing with definitely an advantage, which is why when missionaries go abroad they learn the language of the host culture. It is important to a great extent that the hearing people could take interest in learning sign language for communication purposes most significantly to use during appropriate times, e.g health care settings.

Because language is such an essential phenomenon in ICC it was discussed more within the entities of culture and communication. The dualistic purpose of language was explained, as a key element in all cultures, language can separate people as a communication barrier and it can also unify them into a social unit or make them relate closer in a way when it serves as a liberator. The language we use reflects our culture and determines the realities perceived in that particular culture. Under the same umbrella of understanding culture through language, language and communication were discussed. Despite the negative reference as a barrier, language was viewed as an important tool in communication. It is the main driving force in every sphere of human communication. Since language is culture bound this makes it more hard for intercultural encounters.

The next step in the following chapter tried to find possible ways to reduce the communication gap that exists between the deaf and the hearing. To this effect the discussion incorporated the research findings and semiotic model of Saussure and the hermeneutical theory of Gadamer to help find a solution. We examined the factors that contribute to barriers in ICC and once more language was at the top of the presentation. Lack of common language between two cultures that are trying to communicate impedes this effort. The deaf and the hearing are the two examples of these cultures we dealt with. Due to lack of common language the deaf have lived in social isolation. They have had limitation in all the spheres of globalisation, which include economic, political, social and religious. And this was attributed

to the fact that the hearing have not yet fully acknowledged and accepted the deaf people and that there is a problem.

Some of the factors discussed were stereotypes and prejudices. Both stereotypes and prejudices have negative connotations but we have understood that not all stereotypes and prejudices are bad. It was also noted that we all possess stereotypes and prejudices attitude to a certain extent and to deny stereotype aspect leads to more negative attitude and to deny prejudice is to deny the possibility to understand. There are things that had to be learnt in order to channel the stereotypes and prejudices in a more positive manner. Gadamer emphasised the point when he said, prejudice is the basis of all understanding. Status and power are other factors that can be taken to extremes that could limit or affords communication efforts. With power one has control not only over their lives but over the lives of others too. Those with power have the privilege and advantage over those who do not have. They are able to influence and it would be appreciated if it is positive influence because it would benefit members of the society, the dominant and the sub-groups.

Characteristics of lack of effective communication skills that are individually related are issues of perceptions. Perceptions are influenced by cultural background and vary according to individual's worldview. They can inform or misinform a person about the other person based on the individual's experience and then to perceive that, that is how all members of the deaf culture behave. Interpretation and understanding of behaviour differs in every culture from person to person and the symbols of that culture follow the similar pattern of difference. Because of the differences in symbols communication has been difficult but with attempts made to discover and understand what they mean it is a progress towards achieving effective communication skills.

During communication the interlocutors go through emotions be it good or sad but emotional feelings are understood to hinder effective communication when they are overwhelming. They affect the skill to encode and decode messages as a sender or receiver. We have learnt that the hearing people usually fill pity for the deaf because they are able to hear and speak failing to understand that it is the deaf are and cannot be changed. It is important that interlocutors manage their emotions through practice in order to communicate better with their counterparts. We have realised that it does not help to withdraw from interaction and

communication because of lack of skills then the problem will not be solved, rather at the realisation of the problem the possibility of a solution is the next step.

Familiarity draws people closer together while unfamiliarity makes them go separate ways. Dominant groups join their groups so as the minority groups but this usually ends up dominant groups excluding sub-groups due several reasons including race and cultural background. We have found out that the deaf people have been left out due to cultural differences. And because they could not interact with the hearing they withdrew social encounters. The conclusion to this section is that not being familiar to the culture should not drive people to isolation and withdrawal but rather be an adventure to learn that, which is different from what we are used to.

The last section of this chapter dealt with the increased recognition of ICC requirements to improve communication skills. The first crucial skill is to know oneself. It is done through understanding oneself and one's cultural background. This removes one obstacle on the path towards becoming an interculturally competent communicator. Another requirement is to develop communication empathy. To learn this skill the communicator needs to focus more on the particular culture being studied other than their own. This is because with empathy a person needs to be in rather than being at a distance. Focusing more on the internal state of the person which of course needs patience and determination if the skill is to be acquired.

In further discussion we looked at listening as another important skill, a skill that has proven to be a hard one for most communicators. Listening as an element in every culture is difficult since it is culture bound. Lastly, the requirement that was examined was communication flexibility. It is supposed that a flexible communicator experiences minimal discomfort and is open minded to differences in cultures that are not familiar to hers/his. There is great tolerance attached to the skill of flexibility. And that a communicator is less worried about the ambiguity of the culture and looks forward to meeting new people and learn and broaden their horizon.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

It is recommended that deaf people should not be looked at as handicapped but as people. Their linguistic and cultural rights need to be respected. The issues pertinent to communication between the deaf people and the hearing people, the deaf children and the hearing parents need to be studied further. We need to come up with advanced strategies to enhance the communicative and cognitive developments of deaf children. Bankowski stresses the point that, “strategies are important because of the significant relationship of communicative use of language to cognitive development, as deaf children are prone to experience difficulties in these aspects, unless extraordinary measures are taken” (1991:185).

The RCDE follows a curriculum that is guided by the policy from the Ministry of Education, however, there is a need to follow up to see the extent at which the government is contributing to the education of the deaf people as in how they contribute to the education of the hearing. Observation derived from the study was the RCDE only offers primary school education but for the hearing they receive university education. Therefore, the recommendation comes to that an in-depth study be done regarding education for the deaf.

## Bibliography

- Allwood J & Dorritos B 2004 Intercultural communication at work 10<sup>th</sup> NIC Symposium Goteburg University Sweden.
- Bankowski N, (ed) 1991 *Education and the social construction of mind: Vykotskian perspective on the cognitive development of deaf children*. Washinton DC, Gallaudett University Press.
- Blasco M and Gustafsson J. 2004 *Intercultural Alternatives: Critical Perspectives on Intercultural Encounters in theory and Practice*. Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Condon J and Youset F 1975 *An Introduction to Intercultural communication*. Indianapolis, Bonns Mervil.
- Chandler D 2002 *Semiotics: The basics*. Routledge, London.
- Chao Yuen Ren 1968 *Language and Symbolic Systems*. Cambridge University Press, London.
- Dahl Ø 2006 *Bridges of Understanding Perspectives of Intercultural Communication*. Oslo Academic Press, Oslo.
- Dahl Ø 2003 *Models of Communication and the Golden Moment of Misunderstandings*. In Nils Holm (et-al) (2003): *Intercultural Communication Past and the future*. Selected papers presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> Nordic Symposium for Intercultural Communication. Åbo.
- Devito J A 1990 (ed) *The Nonverbal Communication Reader*. Harper Collins, New York.
- Devries D 1994 *Creation, Handicappism, and the Community of differing abilities*.
- Drønen T.S 2009 *Intercultural Communication and Religious Change*. Routledge, London.
- Eilers F 1987 *Communication Between Cultures*. Divine World Publications, Manila.
- Fiske J 1990 *Introduction to communication studies* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Routledge, London.
- Gadamer H G 1989 *Truth and Method*. Continuum, New York.
- Gjerlow Kriss and Obler Loraine 1999 *Language and the Brain*. Cambridge University Press, UK.
- Gudykunst W and Kim Y 1984 *Methods of Intercultural Communication Resarch*. Sage Publications, Inc California.
- Hall E.T 1959 *The Silent Language*. Anchor Press Double Day New York.
- Hall E.T 1976 *Beyond Culture*. Anchor Books, Double Day New York.
- Jandt F 1995 *Introduction to Intercultural Communication*. Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Jandt F 2004 *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community*. Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Jensen I 2006 *The aspect of power in intercultural communication: In Dahl (et-al) (2006). Bridges of Understanding. Perspective on intercultural communication*. Unipup, Academic press, Oslo.

Lewis R D 1996 *When cultures collide managing successfully across cultures*. Nicholas Brealey Publications, London.

Lyons J 1981 *Language and Linguistics, An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

Mbiti J 1970 *Concepts of God in Africa*. SPCK, United Kingdom.

Nynäs P 1999 “Ich kan mich nicht in Sie finden-*The role of understanding in Intercultural Communication Theory*. Tartu, Estonia.

Concise Oxford English Dictionary 11<sup>th</sup> edition.

Roy A W.J. Strarosta 2010 *Hans-Georg Gadamer, & Intercultural Communication*. Routledge, London.

Schein J 1989 *At Home with Strangers. Exploring Deaf Community in the US*.

Samovar L and Porter R 2007 *Communication Between Cultures* 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc. USA.

Samovar L and Porter R 2004 *Communication Between Cultures* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc. USA.

Samovar L and Porter R 2001 *Communication Between cultures* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc. USA.

Samovar L and Porter R 1991 *Intercultural Communication: A Reader* 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.

Saussure de Ferdinand 1959 *Course in General Linguistics*. Fontana/Collins.

Stingers and Prigogine 1984 *Order out of Chaos*. Bantam Books, New York.

Wiseman L 1989 *Intercultural Communication competence*. Routledge, London.

Website sources

[www.bsdbw.org](http://www.bsdbw.org)

[www.terralingua.org](http://www.terralingua.org)



## **APPENDIX**

### Questionnaire

What are the main problems faced by the deaf in Botswana?

How many deaf centres are there?

Are the services provided in the centres enough and what are they?

Are the male and female facing the same problem?

Describe in detail the relationship between the deaf and the hearing?

Suggest ways in which misconception between the deaf and the hearing can be dealt with.

In which areas would you say the deaf are most left out?

What problems do you foresee if these problems are not realised?

Are there other areas you would like to address as\about the deaf?

What can be done to create better communication and interaction between the deaf and the hearing people?